No. 301 / MAY 1998

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST

Facing the music

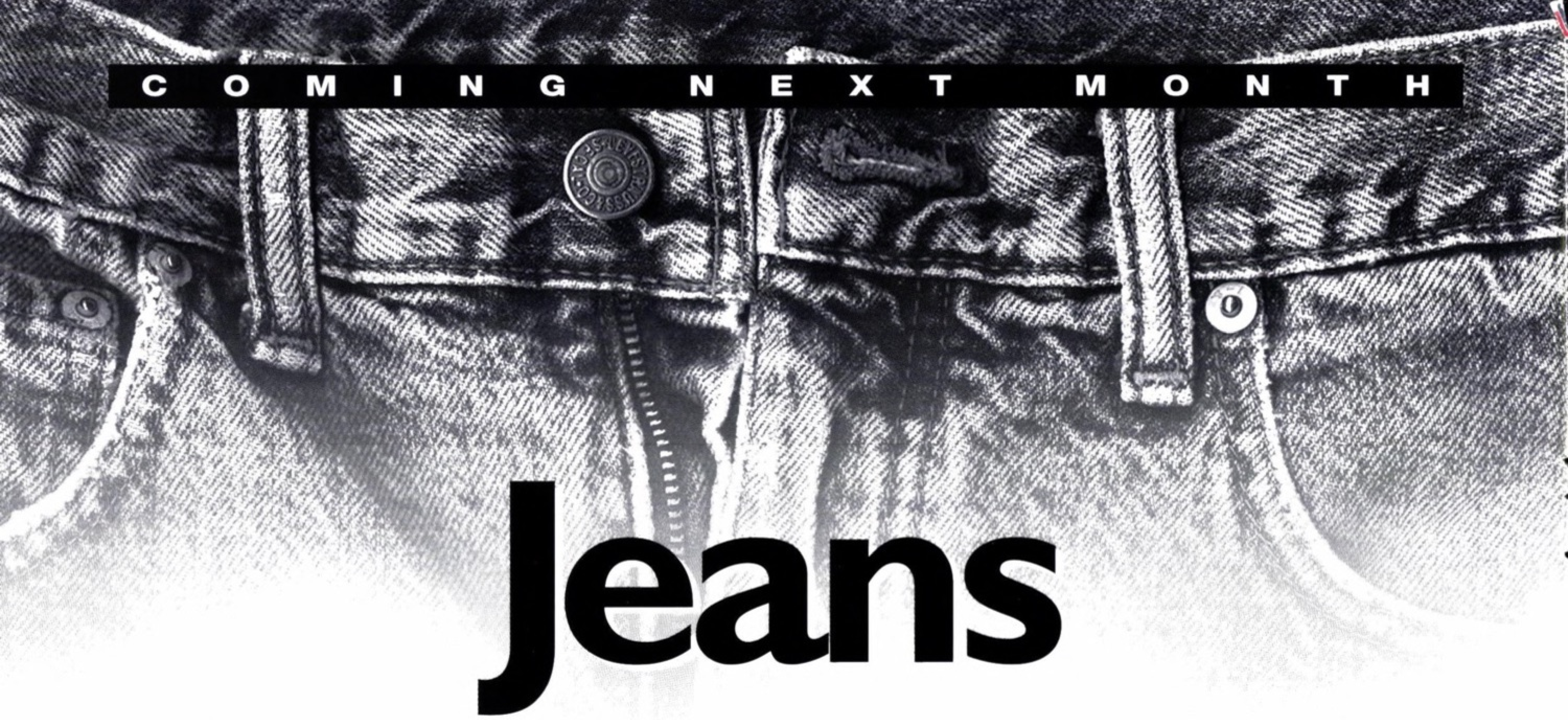
Cuba's Revolution 40 years on

PRICE: UK £2.50 AUS. $5.60 AOTEAROA/NZ $5.50 CANADA/US $4.50

◆

THE PEOPLE, THE IDEAS, THE ACTION IN THE FIGHT FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT

COMING NEXT MONTH



Jeans

HOW PRACTICAL 'WAIST OVERALLS' for gold diggers in California, gun slingers in Hollywood and rebels without a cause almost everywhere finally got smart, clothed the American Dream and sold out to the global rag trade. The NI unpicks the stitches that hold a worldwide icon together and finds – lurking behind the label – a pile of pesticides and toxins, the toil and tears of young women in sweatshops, and the clanking chains of retail mega-stores. It's enough to turn your blue jeans green.

- **KING COTTON: pests proliferate, farmers revolt in Senegal**
- **CRAZY FOR BLUE: denim monster comes out of hiding in India**
- **SWEATING AGAIN: hard labour in Mexico and Los Angeles**
- **IMAGE IS ALL: the weakest link in the retail chains of Canada**
- **FASHION FALLOUT: trends mean business in Australia**
- **JIMI HENDRIX, MAN FRIDAY and SALVAR KAMEEZ: feeling at home in your clothes.**

COMING SOON: ◆ REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ◆ CHOCOLATE ◆ MIGRATION

New Internationalist

The New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

The **New Internationalist (NI)** magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970. Together with a range of other publications it is published by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is wholly owned by the New Internationalist Trust and co-operatively managed:
Accounts: Peter Brown.
Administration: Véronique Szerauc.
Design: Alan Hughes, Andrew Kokotka, Ian Nixon.
Editorial: Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Nikki van der Gaag, David Ransom, Anouk Ride.
Editorial (North America): Wayne Ellwood, Richard Swift.
Magazine marketing: Michael York.
Marketing (North America): Ian McKelvie.
Production: Fran Harvey.
Publications editor: Troth Wells.
Publications marketing: Dexter Tiranti.
Sales and circulation: Jo Lateu, James Rowland.

The **NI** Website:

http://www.newint.org/

The **NI** is published monthly except that the January and February issues are combined into one bumper issue.

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST

The Independent News Collective is an association of radical and alternative publishers. INK publications cover issues of social, political and personal change, issues which are often neglected by the mainstream media. INK enables its members to cooperate on distribution, marketing and publicity. New Internationalist Magazine is an INK member.

ink

It helps us occasionally to allow carefully screened organizations to mail our subscribers. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office.

Subscription enquiries

Please write to your subscription office with full details including (if possible) your subscription number shown on the magazine address label. Please inform us of any change of address.

SUBSCRIPTION OFFICES AND ANNUAL PRICES

UK: PO Box 79, Hertford, SG14 1AQ Tel: (01992) 822899 Fax: (0171) 830 8585 E-mail: subscriptions@newint.org.
Individuals £24.85 p.a.; £6.85 qtly. Institutions £50. Student/Unwaged £14.70 (please telephone for further information).
Republic of Ireland: 9 Upper Fitzwilliam St, FREEPOST, Dublin 2. Tel: (0044) or (0) 1865 728181.
Fax: (0044) or (0)1865 793152. *Individuals IR £29.85 p.a.; Institutions IR £55 p.a.*
Canada: 35 Riviera Dr., Unit 17, Markham, ON L3R 8N4. Tel: (905) 946-0407 Fax: (905) 946-0410. E-mail: magazine@indas.on.ca
Individuals 1 yr – $38.50 (includes GST), in NF, NS, NB $41.38 (includes HST); Institutions 1 yr – $64.20 (includes GST) in NF, NS, NB $69.00 (includes HST); Overseas (by air) 1 yr – $60; GST Reg No R121784854.
United States: PO Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092. Tel: (905) 946 0407. Fax: (905) 946 0410. E-mail: magazine@indas.on.ca
Individuals 1 yr – $35.98 Overseas (by air) 1 yr – $60; Institutions 1 yr – $60.
Australia and PNG: 7 Hutt Street, Adelaide, S.A., 5000. Tel: (08) 8232 1563 Fax: (08) 8232 1887.
Individuals A$56.40.
Aotearoa/New Zealand: PO Box 4499, Christchurch. Tel: +64 33 656 153 E-mail: newint@chch.planet.org.nz
Individuals $55; Institutions $65 (includes GST).
South Africa: New Internationalist, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough LE16 9EF.
Tel: (0044) or (0) 1865 728181. Fax: (0044) or (0)1865 793152.
Rest of the World: PO Box 79, Hertford, SG14 1AQ UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 1992 822899.
Individuals £29.85 p.a.; £8.50 qtly. Institutions £55 p.a. Please pay in sterling by UK Cheque, Eurocheque, Visa, Mastercard or UK Banker's Draft. Despatch by air only.

Editorial and Advertising Offices

Editorial: 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 1865 728181. Fax: (0044) or (0)1865 793152.
E-mail: ni@newint.org **Advertising:** Tel/Fax: (0044) or (0) 01372 276233.

Canada/US Editorial: 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1. Tel: (416) 588 6478. Fax: (416) 537 6435.
E-mail: nican@web.net **Advertising:** Tel: (902) 421 7022 Fax: (902) 425 0166.

Australia: 7 Hutt Street, Adelaide, S.A. 5000. Tel: (08) 82321563 Fax: (08) 8232 1887. E-mail: sandyl@newint.com.au

Print and Distribution

Origination: Graphic Facilities, London UK.

Printed on environmentally friendly paper by Warners Midlands plc, UK.

News trade distributor: COMAG Specialist Division, Mercury Centre, Central Way, Feltham, Middlesex TW14 0RX, UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 181 844 1000. Fax: (0044) or (0) 181 751 2666.

North America. Publications Contract 101400. Postage Paid at Toronto. Periodicals postage paid at Lewiston, NY. (USPS 329-770) US Post-master: send address changes to: New Internationalist, PO Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092.

Permissions and Indexing

Permissions: UK/Rest of the World: Sonja Singleton, Cover Stories, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1, UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 171 278 2332. Fax: (0044) or (0) 171 837 1192. Canada/US permissions: Toronto Editorial Office. Member of Cancopy. Reproduction of all material in **NI**, excluding photographs, is free to primary and secondary schools.

Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index, CPI CD-ROM, CPI Online, the Canadian Magazine Index, CBCA OnDisc and the Alternative Press Index.

© New Internationalist Publications Ltd. 1998.

ISSN 03050 9529

Not All Ethical Investment Specialists Are The Same

ETHICAL
INVESTORS GROUP
Ethical Financial Management

- Provide advice exclusively on ethical and green investments
- Help you match your money with your principles - whatever they may be
- Provide a countrywide financial advice service
- Distribute at least 50% of our own net profits to charities & campaigning groups, to date over £200,000

WE CAN ARRANGE
PENSIONS, PEPs, LIFE ASSURANCE*, REGULAR SAVINGS*, LUMP SUM INVESTMENTS*
PRIVATE PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT*

Contact The Ethical Specialists
Ethical Investors Group, Milestone, Greet Road,
Greet, Cheltenham, GL54 5BG. Tel: 01242 604550

Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority
*The PIA does not regulate all of the products within this category.
Ethical Investors Group is the trading name of Ethical Investors (UK) Limited.
Registered in England. Registered number 2857294.
Statutory Warning: The value of an investment can fall as well as rise.

Please Tick where appropriate
☐ Retirement Planning ☐ Lump Sum Investments* ☐ Regular Savings*
☐ Life Assurance and Protection*

Ms/Mr/Mrs ....

Address ....

.... Tel: Work .... Home ....

NI

INTERNATIONAL LIVING

Live in a multi-cultural community. **Explore** the world with fellow students from 20-25 nations. **Follow** the newest trends in world politics, economy and society. **Learn** about Europe as seen by Europeans, Africa as seen by Africans, Asia as seen by Asians…
Benefit from our experienced, well qualified teaching staff from around the world.

"You helped me open the doors I couldn't open myself…" *Ex-student*

UN designated
Peace Messenger

The International People's College,
1 Montebello Alle,
DK - 300 Helsingør, DENMARK (NI)
Tel: 4921 3361 Fax: 4921 2128

With
our help
your
investment
can avoid
these
hidden costs.

www.barchestergreen.co.uk/ethical

Not everyone believes in profit at any cost.
Barchester Green Investment are independent financial advisers who specialise in ethical investment, a profitable way of investing your money without compromising your values. To find out more about profit with principle call: 01722 331241 (24 hrs) or fill in the coupon.

BARCHESTER GREEN INVESTMENT
Established 1985

Mr/Mrs/Ms ______________________

Address ______________________

____

Postcode ____________ Tel. ______________

Return to: Barchester Green Investment Freepost Salisbury Wilts SP1 2UR
Remember, the price of units can fall as well as rise and past performance is not a guarantee to the future.
Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority.
NI

Postgraduate Taught Courses In The Social Sciences and Humanities

Looking for the excitement of an intellectual challenge...

or to sharpen up those skills so necessary for career development?

Whatever your aim, the University of Bradford has a range of postgraduate taught courses which will meet your needs.

Noted for their academic excellence, courses within the Faculty encourage students to apply theory to practice and to put knowledge to work in a variety of contexts. Is it any wonder that Bradford has one of the best employment rates of all UK Universities?

Students may study full or part-time and a number of courses offer opportunities for open and distance learning.

A variety of postgraduate diploma courses are also available and, subject to performance, students who enter without conventional academic qualifications may be allowed to proceed to Masters programmes.

A limited number of bursaries may be available. You can receive details of these from the departments concerned.

Bradford also offers an exciting range of research opportunities for postgraduate students. Further information is available from academic departments.

Department of Applied Social Studies
MA in Social Work and Social Care
contact: Brid Featherstone on 01274 233504
email: v.mcguinness@bradford.ac.uk

Development & Project Planning Centre
MSc Development & Project Planning
MSc Macro-Economic Policy & Planning in Developing Countries
MSc Agricultural Development & Rural Finance
MA International Development Studies
MSc Project Planning & Management
contact: Karen Bailey on 01274 233979
email: k.r.bailey1@bradford.ac.uk

Department of European Studies
MA European Integration
MA East European Studies
MA European/Latin American Relations
MA Modern European History
contact: Margaret Haldane on 01274 233145
email: m.haldane@bradford.ac.uk

Dept of Interdisciplinary Human Studies
MA Philosophy of Social & Natural Sciences
MSc Society, Economy & Polity
contact: Julie Baxter on 01274 235193
email: j.k.baxter@bradford.ac.uk

Management Centre
MBA Master of Business Administration
MA International Management
contact: Postgraduate Programme Office on 01274 234373
email: ubmc@bradford.ac.uk

Department of Modern Languages
MA Interpreting & Translating
MA Interpreting & Translating for International Business
MA European Languages & Cultural Studies
MA European Media & Cultural Studies
contact: Anne Croasdell on 01274 234619
email: a.e.croasdell@bradford.ac.uk

Department of Peace Studies
MA Conflict Resolution
MA International Politics & Security Studies
MA Peace Studies
contact: Hazel Swaine on 01274 234171
email: h.c.swaine1@bradford.ac.uk

Department of Social & Economic Studies
MSc Ethnicity & Identity
MSc Ethnicity & Health
MSc Ethnicity & Education
contact: Jane Hammond on 01274 234802
email: j.m.hammond@bradford.ac.uk

Faculty Graduate School
MA Social Research Methods
MRes Research Methods for Social Sciences & Humanities (to be approved)
contact: Graduate School Secretary on 01274 235587
email: gradss@bradford.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF
BRADFORD

MAKING KNOWLEDGE WORK

Information is also available on the World Wide Web. The Bradford homepage can be accessed at: http://www.bradford.ac.uk
This page also provides easy access to the departmental pages maintained by the departments listed above, and to our Postgraduate Prospectus.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, POLITICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

MASTERS PROGRAMME IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

(Full-time/Part-time)

Taught by staff with a wide range of practical and research experience of development issues by Africa, Asia and Latin America, the MSc offers the following units, each of which can be taken as a short course:

Image of Development
Developing Countries in the World Economy
International Trade
Health and Gender Issues
Agrarian Policies
Strategies for Industrialisation
Human Rights
The State, Civil Society and Development
Research Methods for Development Studies

A Research Project forms a central part of the course, with staff offering detailed supervision of programmes directed to students' research interests. Students have access to computerised data bank in the internet, designed specifically for research into development issues. The MSc has ESRC specialist subject recognition.

The development programme also offers a distance learning MSc in Environmental and Development Education.

Masters courses are also offered in European Politics, European Public Policy, Social Analysis, Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Education and Mathematics Education.

For further details of these courses and an application form, please contact either the Course Administrator, Caroline Gordon, on 0171-815 5802, or the Course Director, Professor John Taylor, on 0171-815 5769, School of Education, Politics and Social Sciences, South Bank University, 103 Borough Road, London SE1 0AA.

The University of Choice

A charity serving the community through excellence in teaching and research.

SOUTH BANK
UNIVERSITY
·LONDON·

An A-Z of the Middle East

a reference CD-ROM

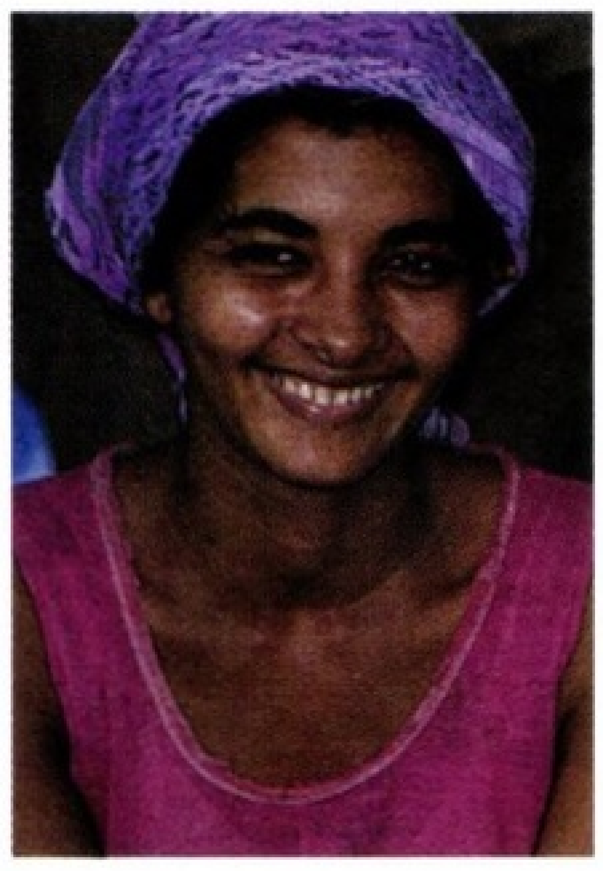
WRITTEN BY PRESTIGIOUS *LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE* AUTHORS DOMINIQUE VIDAL AND ALAIN GRESH

- LOOK UP OVER 100 ENTRIES INCLUDING SADDAM HUSSEIN ▪ CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON YITZHAK RABIN ▪ NUCLEAR WEAPONRY KURDS ▪ INTIFADA
- VIEW THE EXTENSIVE SELECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND ANIMATED MAPS
- CONSULT THE COMPREHENSIVE GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND TERMS
- REFER TO TEXTS OF FUNDAMENTAL TREATIES, AGREEMENTS AND UN RESOLUTIONS, THE DETAILED CHRONOLOGY, BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND LIST OF RELATED WEBSITES
- CONDUCT WIDE-RANGING WORD SEARCHES

THIS INCISIVE AND ENGAGING ACCOUNT OF THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE 20TH CENTURY WILL APPEAL TO EXPERTS, STUDENTS AND THOSE WITH A GENERAL INTEREST IN THE REGION. TO ORDER YOUR COPY, PRICED AT £19.99 PLUS £2.00 P&P, CALL 0171 823 7488

SINDIBAD MULTIMEDIA
www.sindibad.co.uk

CONTENTS



On the cusp of change 7
Wayne Ellwood begins his Cuban odyssey in the crumbling capital of Havana.

Flying pigeons and socialist slogans 10
Reflections on Havana street life.

The meaning of Che 11
A thumbnail sketch of a real-life hero.

Slim pickings in the 'special period' 12
The break-up of the Soviet Union was a body blow to the Cuban economy. The impact is still being felt.

The great dollar chase 14
Structural adjustment Cuban style.

Keeping the lid on dissent 17
An interview with Cuba's top human-rights activist Elizardo Sanchez.

A brief history of Cuba 18

Linking people to the land 20
Huge, inefficient state farms have been the order of the day. But food shortages are forcing the Government to change its tune.

Green guerrillas 22
City folk are attacking the soil – sans *chemicals.*

Yankees in the midst 23
Believe it or not the US has an active military base on Cuban soil. We get as close as we can.

CUBA – THE FACTS 24

Chasing the good life 26
Tourism is booming with the Government's blessing. Ironically, the flood of dollars may be the most serious threat to the Revolution yet.

Jewels in the crown 27
Fighting to protect free healthcare and education in a time of diminishing resources.

People's power and the Politburo 28
Hobbled by bureaucracy and justifiably paranoid of its northern neighbour, the Castro Government must find space for other voices.

Action 30

Letters 2
Letter from Mongolia 3
Update 4
The NI Interview with **Acacio Marquez** 31
Reviews: plus **Bapsi Sidhwa** classic 32
NI Crossword 34
Endpiece: by **Grace Pundyk** 35
Country profile: Bahrain 36

FRONT COVER BY **JULIO ETCHART**.
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **ALAN HUGHES**.

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

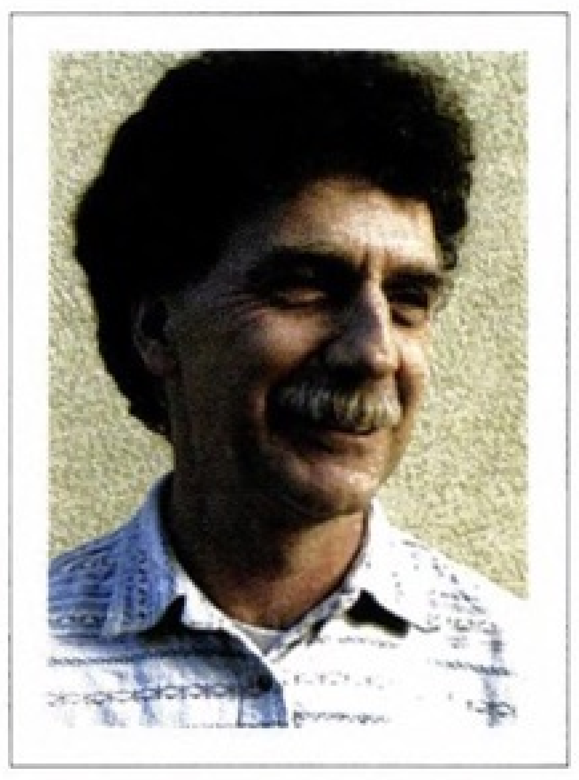
Cuba

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

You might think that a whole magazine on Cuba would be space enough to say everything you wanted. But somehow it never quite works out that way. The issue that follows is based on a three-and-a-half week whirlwind visit during which I interviewed more than 70 people from one end of the island to the other. Some of these meetings were pre-arranged, others spontaneous and informal. About a quarter of those people appear in the articles that follow. The rest, for better or worse, will stay with me. But there is one who stands out – and whom I want to tell you about now.

I met Alberto Jones quite by chance in the Guantánamo airport near the end of my trip. We were queuing up to feed our carry-on luggage into the x-ray scanner and when I mumbled something in broken Spanish he caught my Anglo accent. We began to chat and his story slowly unfolded during the flight back to Havana.

He is a Cuban of Jamaican descent with a doctorate in animal pathology now living in northern Florida. A soft-spoken, unassuming kind of guy – a gentleman. He spent four-and-a-half years in a Cuban prison in the 1970s for 'slandering the name of Che', a trumped-up charge foisted on him for trying to expose bureaucratic corruption in the laboratory where he worked. After being released from prison he tried diligently to clear his name – in vain. The only employment available was sweeping the lab floor. In desperation, he and seven others left for the US in a small boat in the exile wave of 1980, rowing 140 kilometres across the choppy waters of the Straits of Florida.



Today he runs a cleaning-supplies business. But his real passion is the small aid agency he set up to help his fellow Cubans. Several times a year he travels home with two large suitcases crammed with donated medical supplies. I was amazed by his dedication, given the monstrous injustice he had suffered. So I asked him whether he still harboured any resentment or anger.

'I was invited to a reception for solidarity workers in Havana a few years ago,' he replied. 'Fidel was there. When I finally made my way to the front of the line to shake his hand he asked my name, then glanced at his aide. They exchanged whispers. He turned to me, clasped my hand and looked into my eyes. "How did it ever happen, Dr Jones?" he said. "How did it ever happen?" That was enough for me. I had my apology and I was at peace.'

Alberto Jones' story made me even more intensely aware of Cuba's complexities. Fidel Castro's socialist experiment has dramatically improved the lives of ordinary citizens and there is much to defend. But there are also worrying problems.

Like Dr Jones the Cuban people are aware of their country's shortcomings and they want to do something about them. But they bristle when pushed and bullied. They want and need international support, but on their own terms.

Cuba has always aroused fierce passions on both the Right and the Left of the political divide. It still does. This issue is an attempt to highlight the complexities of a debate which is too often terribly polarized, to add grey tones to the stark black-and-white views of the country which can pass for informed opinion.

Wayne Ellwood

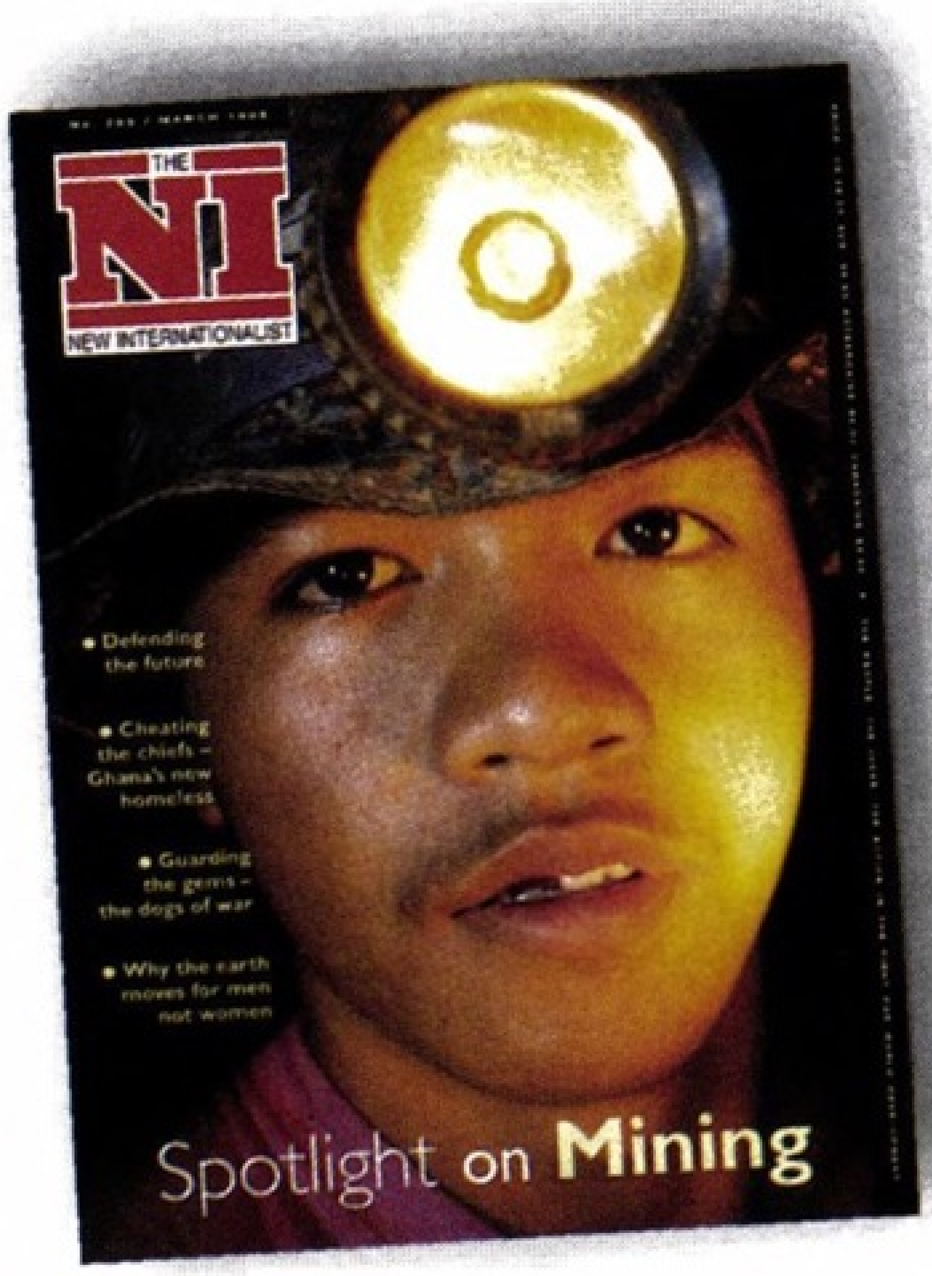
Wayne Ellwood
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail are inside the front cover.

Modern-day vultures

Your issue on ***Mining*** (**NI 299**) exposed a culture of greed and exploitation which is synonymous with the mining giants like Rio Tinto or South African-Anglo De Beers and their like. These corporations are strangling developing countries around the world with their 'couldn't-care-less' attitudes when they are invited to mine these countries. This neo-colonialist approach – worshipping the almighty Dollar regardless of the people, their culture and the environment – has got to stop.



I am glad your magazine touched on the mercenary movement. These hired guns are acting like modern-day vultures over the African deserts. One of these groups, Sandline International, tried to enter the conflict in Bougainville but were chased away by the South Pacific people.

I hope your magazine continues to expose the dirty linen of some of these mining companies for the world to read about.

Ray L Anderson
Brunswick, Australia

Pointless gag

Why the pointless and gratuitous reference to 'stone-deaf' in your otherwise informative issue on mineral extraction? (***Mining*** **NI 299**) It's not a nice (nor a much-championed) disability and the gag is only going to encourage perceptions of the deaf and partly-deaf as somehow acceptable butts of humour. It also encourages the idea that people with this disability are somehow remote and hardened.

As a drinker of black coffee I have become tediously used to being lectured on implicit racism by the well-meaning fellow-**NI** types when I ask for one. I'm rather disappointed then that **NI** has not seen fit to extend its monitoring of material to cover hearing disability and implicitly accepts joke-making against it in a way which it would never consider in feminist, age or culturally related issues.

David Rowett
Grimsby, England

Changing the world

My mother has been supporting the **NI** for about four years and although I applauded her actions and beliefs I never actually read any of the reports. I'm not sure what compelled me to read the issue on human rights (***No hiding place*** **NI 298**). It could have been moral responsibility but it was more likely boredom. And I have to say I was... what? Shocked? Surprised? What I felt is too hard to describe, but anger, shock and agony surrounded with an absolute disbelief at the monstrosities that are occurring.

The only amusing thing about this is the argument I've just had with myself about doing something to change the world. One side was arguing that I couldn't change anything even if I tried, and the other side reprimanded me for being selfish.

I now realize that if the people at the **NI** had had the outlook that one person can't make a difference, then all the wonderful work you have done wouldn't have been accomplished.

So I'm determined. I'm not just going to turn over the page and forget about what I've read. I'm going to try and do something to change how people think and act.

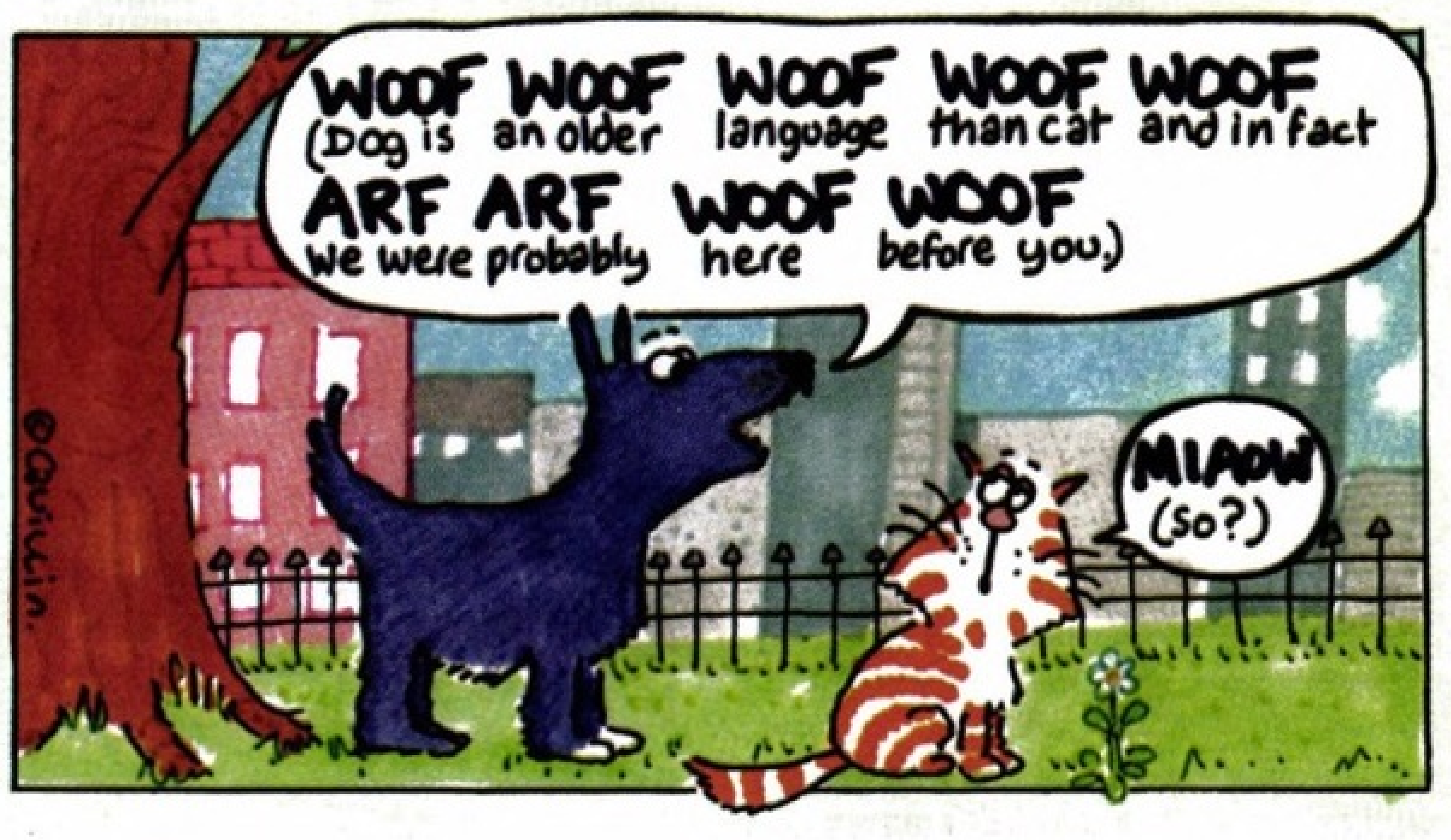
Kim Sarah Holt
Sheffield, England

Impure language

Your issue on ***Western Sahara*** (**NI 297**) includes a helpful historical survey. There we read that the local people 'shared the same language, Hassania (one of the purest dialects of Arabic now spoken)...' If Hassania is a language, why is it described as a 'dialect' of Arabic? If it's one of the 'purest' dialects, who speaks the most 'impure' dialect? Not the Moroccans, I hope.

It's very easy to fall into the trap of making aesthetic or even moral judgements about language, and this is usually harmless enough, but such judgements are almost always incoherent. There are serious dangers when they are allowed to spill over into implied cultural, social or moral judgement about speakers of languages. While we must condemn attempts to denigrate or discriminate against people on grounds of language or dialect, we must never lurch into the opposite and equally irrational extreme of assuming that the linguistic system of an oppressed people is somehow superior to that of their oppressors.

Andrew Spencer
Colchester, England


WOOF WOOF WOOF WOOF WOOF (Dog is an older language than cat and in fact ARF ARF WOOF WOOF we were probably here before you)
MIAOW (so?)
©Quillin
VIV QUILLIN

Fair cop

Ali Qassim advocates an International Criminal Court (***No hiding place*** **NI 298**) to try, convict and punish offenders against human rights. This process would be appropriate, he suggests, 'when three factors converge: the crimes are grave; the international community has a deep interest in seeing them prosecuted and punished; and when national judicial systems are unable or unwilling to bring the perpetrator to justice.'

One such criminal, he tells us, is Saddam Hussein. But Saddam Hussein is not likely to walk out with his hands up, saying, 'It's a fair cop, guv'nor' and submit to whatever punishment the ICC awards.

What then? Armed intervention? Sanctions? The previous article by Felicity Arbuthnot had just characterized sanctions in support of human rights as 'carefully planned and stage-managed hypocrisy'! So how will the ICC enforce its condemnations? By expressing moral indignation? We all do that, for what good it does.

The reason I read the **NI** is because it brings to light issues like these, discusses them and encourages people to think about them. But it also has to be pointed out that where intransigent dictators are concerned, there are no easy options.

Charles Phillips
Bromley, England

Full picture

When I read it, I thought your issue on ***Globalization*** (**NI 296**) was as good as I could get and that the **NI** would have served me as well as anyone in coming to terms with these matters.

In the past couple of weeks, however, I've chanced on several articles in other journals which have been 1) incisive yet simple 2) accessible yet packed with analysis 3) educative without a hint of condescension. On balance, they gave me a much better handle on understanding globalization than the entire edition of the **NI**. They also portrayed the issue with an openness and balance that represented all political and economic realities, issues of justice and redistribution of wealth rather than a supercilious liberal censoring or rewrite.

I am a Left-wing member of the Labor Party and am deeply committed to their core values. But I resist the notion that progress can only be made by being spoon-fed rather than exposed to the full picture – especially when it isn't fashionable in liberal circles to admit errors.

I need and want the full picture and the open admission that our opponents sometimes get things right. I'm tired of the **NI** élite sifting the facts on my behalf.

Peter Marshall
Stanmore, Australia

Tibetan prisoner

The Brad Pitt film *Seven Years in Tibet* has the excellent side-effect of making people aware of the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the often-brutal suppression of Tibetan culture and religion since the 1950s.

Seven years in a Tibetan prison is what was handed down to Phuntsog Cheokyi, a Tibetan Buddhist nun arrested in June 1993 for taking part in a peaceful pro-independence demonstration against Chinese rule in Tibet. Amnesty International regard her as a prisoner of conscience. Of the 11 other nuns arrested with her, one died as a result of beatings in prison.

For further information contact Amnesty Mid-Down Group, who are campaigning for her release, at PO Box 6, Downpatrick, BT30 6UF.

John Price
Downpatrick, Northern Ireland

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

Mother Rock

Louisa Waugh starts the first of a new series of letters from Mongolia with a visit to a sacred shrine in the steppes.

THE RUMOUR started many years ago. Amidst boulders littered across the steppe 70 kilometres south-west of Ulaanbaatar, the Mother was healing and answering prayers in return for gifts and worship.

Mongolians flock to this bulbous, three-metre-tall rock, carved by the elements into the crude outline of a woman. They come weighed down with bottles of vodka and milk, food and the brilliant blue-silk scarves (*hadags*) they use to adorn temples, cairns and all things sacred and powerful. This worship of the land, the trees, mountains and the startling blue Central Asian sky is older than Mongolia itself and existed aeons before Buddhism was introduced here in the thirteenth century.

I visited the rock with my Mongolian friends at the end of my second winter here. We'd just spent a weekend horse-riding and camping with some local nomads. One of my friends, Tsetsge, suggested we detour to the Mother on our way home to Ulaanbaatar, as she wanted to pray for her 68-year-old father who'd become seriously ill.

'Worshipping at Mother Rock and other shrines and Buddhist temples was outlawed for nearly 70 years after the 1921 socialist revolution,' she told me during the grinding, roadless journey.

'It was only when we got democracy at the beginning of the 1990s that we were allowed to return and practise our rituals. The irony is that Shamanism and Buddhism are becoming more important now, as though people need to make up for all that lost time.'

SARAH JOHN

I was excited about this visit. Ever since I first briefly glimpsed Mongolia whilst on the way to China in 1993, I'd vowed to return to the steppe, to learn about the traditions of this still-thriving nomadic culture. I had been living in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, since 1996, writing, editing and teaching a bit of English.

And now we were heading through the heart of the mysterious steppe. As we sat crushed in the back of a dilapidated Russian jeep with three other Mongolian friends, we laughed at a herd of Bactrian camels meandering across the trail. The whole herd was shedding its winter coat. Sheets of matted brown fuzz trailed from them as they swayed in front of us. We mocked their scruffiness as they regarded us with haughty camel contempt.

Suddenly we dipped into a valley, and there she was – Mother Rock.

The stench hit me as soon as we scrambled out of our jeep. Littered with rotting food, fermenting milk and shattered vodka bottles, the shrine at first resembles a sacred rubbish tip. But I was enthralled – the Mother, swathed in hadags, was being encircled by a coil of Mongolians, including many young people. Everyone was carrying bottles and packages which they placed in front of the rock as others bowed their heads and murmured prayers. The shrine was enclosed by a crumbling wall made entirely of black tea: dried, compressed into bricks and stacked a metre high.

Tsetsge and I entered, pushing through hundreds of hadags tied to a makeshift wooden archway. Smoke rose from a small fire choking with incense as we picked our way through food debris towards the rock. An elderly woman, bent almost double by a life of herding and foraging, leant her forehead against the rock, wringing her hands as she prayed.

Tsetsge took a turquoise hadag from her sheepskin jacket pocket and delicately wrapped it around the neck of the rock. She whispered prayers for her father and gently laid a wedge of cheese and a small bottle of yoghurt on the heap of offerings.

We were surrounded by the devout and the hopeful. Students arrive at the rock *en masse* before exams and women desperate for a child visit and beg to conceive. Across the steppe there are Mother Trees and even a Mother Mountain in the southern Gobi desert.

Older people stubbornly held on to the beliefs of their ancestors and are now enjoying the freedom to worship, and they encourage their children to do the same. My landlord, Batbold, who's a 32-year-old cancer specialist, has told me in all seriousness that visiting Mother Rock annually for three years ensures health and well being.

'But only,' he reiterated, 'if you revere the Rock and present her with hadags, food and milk.' Mother Rock demands – and gets – respect.

Tsetsge's father, by the way, is doing fine.

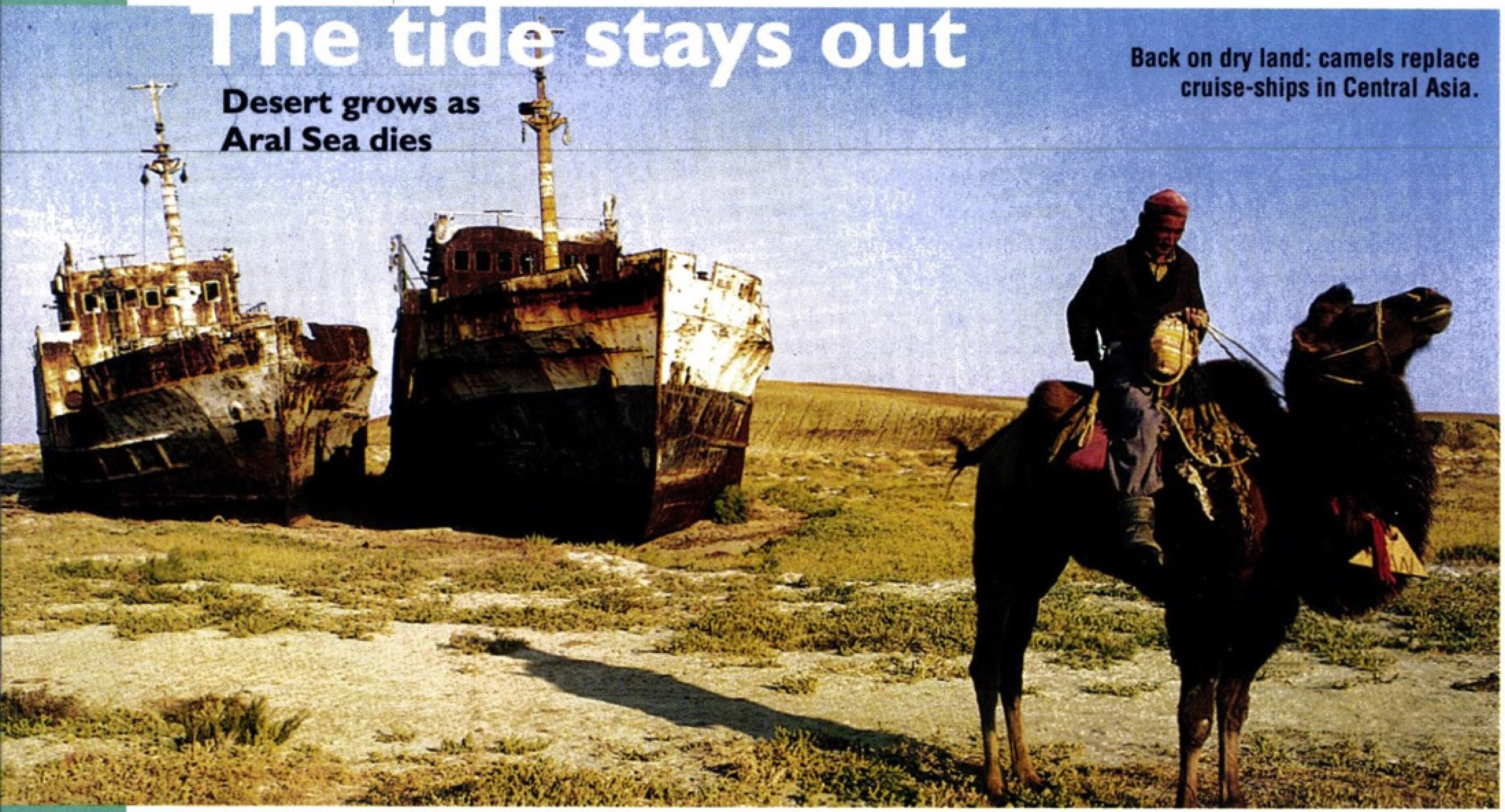
Louisa Waugh is a freelance writer living and working in Mongolia.

Update

ENVIRONMENT

The tide stays out

Desert grows as Aral Sea dies



Back on dry land: camels replace cruise-ships in Central Asia.

GIL MOTI / STILL PICTURES

'WHEN I was a small child I used to go swimming all the time,' says Kubeisin Ikmitulayev. He is talking about the Aral Sea, in Central Asia. 'The water came right up to our backyard. But by the time I was eight years old, it was too far to walk.' He has recently celebrated his 30th birthday and the Sea is now 112 kilometres away from his home. In his lifetime the Aral has shrunk by more than half, from 65,000 square kilometres – the world's fourth-largest lake – to 31,200 square kilometres.

When Kubeisin was born, Muynak was a thriving port and a popular resort on the Aral Sea. Its population has now dropped from 45,000 to 28,000. Cotton crops to supply the Soviet Union became the main occupation in the region a few decades ago. A maze of irrigation canals was built, but much of the diverted water was lost to evaporation or seepage because the canals were not covered or lined. Only a trickle of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya Rivers was left to feed the Aral.

This water is contaminated with pesticides and other chemicals sprayed on the cotton and rice fields. The chemicals settled on the seabed. Now that much of the sea has shrunk, windstorms carry them through the streets of Muynak and hundreds of miles beyond. 'Dust storms pollute the air we breathe and the water we drink,' says Orinbey Yusekepov, a local doctor. 'We are seeing a very high incidence of anaemia, especially among children. Cancers have increased. Stomach and intestinal diseases are very common. People's kidneys and livers cannot stay healthy in an environment like this.'

The five Central Asian countries affected by the loss of the Aral Sea (Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) have urged action to protect what remains of the Aral – but none is optimistic. Scientists and politicians agree that the only hope for halting the shrinkage would involve drastic conservation. But because all the Central Asian countries need to use the water now, none is ready to take radical steps. An Uzbek Government official, Ospan Kariansakov, says cuts to water use would mean a big drop in agricultural production, widespread unemployment and social dislocation: 'Maybe we could absorb a five-per-cent cut but no more than that.' Scientist Sadar Gasanov says: 'If these countries are going to change their ways and cut their water use, they need to industrialize or at least start growing other crops that don't need as much water.' In an area reliant on agriculture to make a living, he says, 'that is a huge project.'

Stephen Kinzer/*International Herald Tribune* No 35655

Whipped

'From now on, we shall have to whip on the spot all those drivers causing accidents due to negligence,' announced Tanzania's Inspector General of Police Omari Mahita. Two serious bus crashes this year left 32 people dead. And the World Bank estimates accidents cost Tanzania more than its annual budget for education.

Mahita's announcement has produced an outcry from human-rights activists, lawyers and bus drivers. Chair of the Tanzania Bus Owners Association says: 'Giving police such powers could be a source of embarrassment to the entire road-transport sector.'

Alfred Mbogora/Gemini News Service

Empower women

In the US a woman is physically abused by her intimate partner every nine seconds; every day 6,000 girls are genitally mutilated worldwide and roughly 60 million women who should be alive are now 'missing' because of gender discrimination. These facts highlight the need for action to implement the UN Declaration of Human Rights on its 50th anniversary. Among the most urgent strategies to empower women worldwide include: the education of girls, implementation of anti-violence laws, dissemination of information to women about their rights, fostering of women's economic autonomy, training of police and judiciary in gender equality and political participation of women.

Noeleen Heyzer/
Third World Network Features

Trustworthy computers

Alcoholics are twice as likely to confess a drink problem to a computer as to a doctor, according to a study in the US. Kenneth Kobak from the University of Wisconsin says: 'We don't know whether the computer is over-diagnosing or whether people are just more honest with a computer. But we think it's the latter.' Kobak's earlier work found people are less embarrassed and more willing to disclose information about sensitive issues such as risky sexual behaviour or suicidal tendencies when questioned by a computer. He thinks use of a computer at a patient's check-up may help to diagnose health problems.

New Scientist No 2102

JULIO ETCHART / STILL PICTURES

PROSTITUTION

Rough and tumble

Sex workers unite in Calcutta

SEAN SPRAGUE / PANOS

Tough Women Together Committee has some new recruits – men.

A group of male sex workers has come out into the open and joined organizations for female prostitutes for the first time in Calcutta, India. 'Our situation is worse than that of female sex workers because society doesn't accept us as normal,' says a spokesperson for male prostitutes, Madhu Sarkar. 'Besides, the women are doing great work looking after themselves. Why not be together when we're in the same boat, though in different context?'

This thinking led several men to join *Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee*, which translates as 'Tough Women Together Committee' (DMSC).

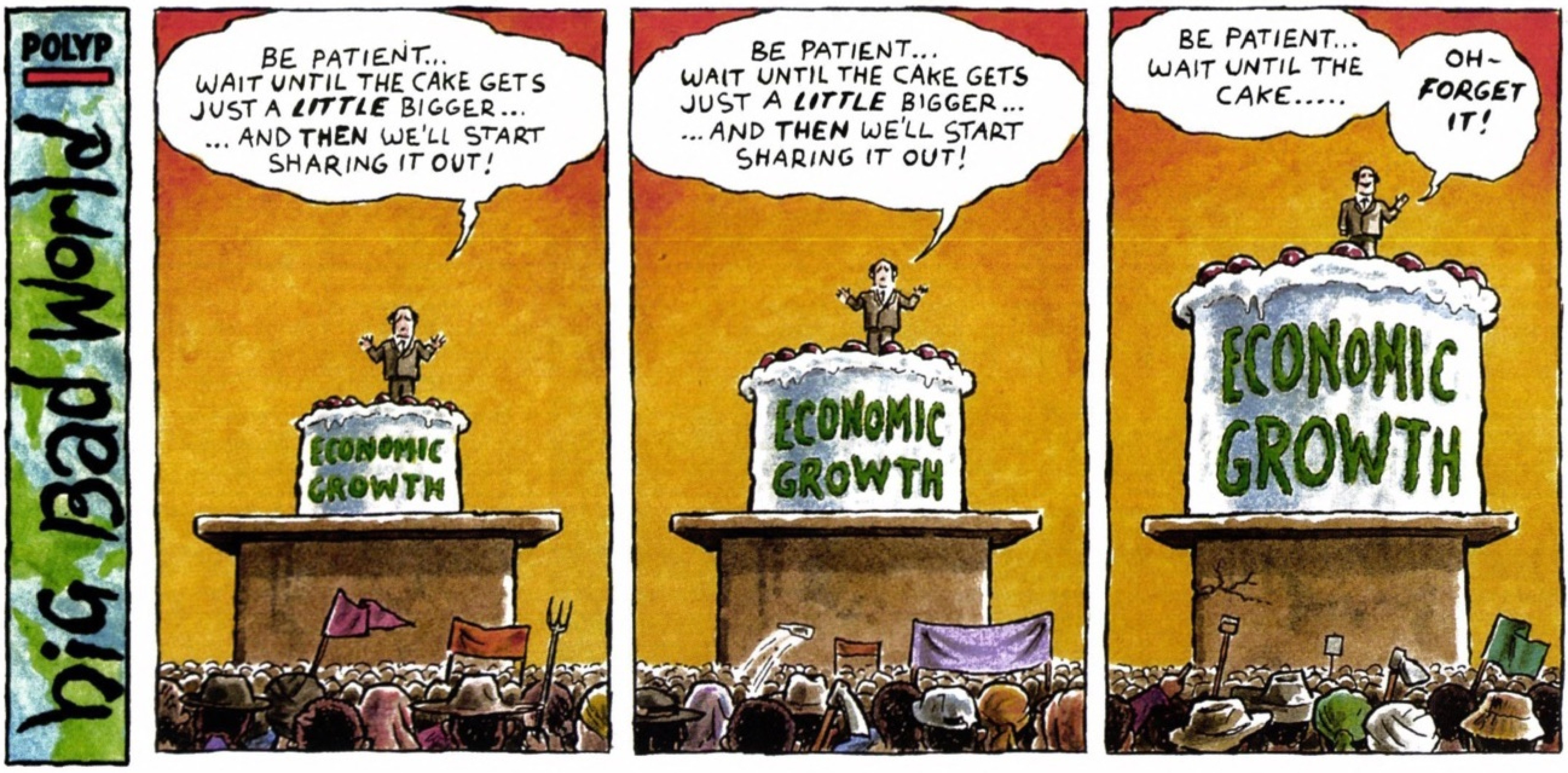
'When Madhu and friends approached us we were rather surprised,' admits DMSC secretary Sadhana Mukherjee. But she says they soon found men faced problems similar to women. The existence of male sex workers has rarely been acknowledged. When they were photographed and publicized many locals were shocked. According to a report by the Panos Institute there are an estimated 50,000 male prostitutes in Mumbai/Bombay alone, compared with 250,000 female prostitutes. The report says there are well-documented accounts of male prostitutes in every region of the world and emphasizes that they have sex with men and women.

The DMSC grew out of an AIDS prevention project in Songachi, Calcutta's biggest red-light district, which is home to around 5,000 sex workers. Now it seeks recognition of sex workers under industrial legislation. The DMSC hopes this will stop police harassment, establish supervision to prevent minors from entering the trade and enable co-operatives to be set up in order to keep members out of the grip of money lenders.

A recent sex-workers' convention, organized by DMSC, ran for three days and attracted more than 3,000 participants from India and abroad. Male sex workers took part and some staged performances of song or dance. 'We learn these arts to please our clients,' says Madhu. 'But clients often ill-treat us, even physically torture us. We can't say anything because, unlike the women, we don't have our own place to bring them to. Many of us live with our families – mothers, brothers and so on. Drawing the attention of people in the area would only mean we'd be arrested by the police.'

Madhu's next plan is to establish a drop-in centre where male sex workers can exchange news and mobilize resources to help them withstand official harassment. Madhu is critical of society's hypocrisy towards male sex workers, pointing out that they exist because of public demand.

Ranjita Biswas/Gemini News Service


POLYP
big Bad World
BE PATIENT... WAIT UNTIL THE CAKE GETS JUST A LITTLE BIGGER... ...AND THEN WE'LL START SHARING IT OUT!
ECONOMIC GROWTH
BE PATIENT... WAIT UNTIL THE CAKE GETS JUST A LITTLE BIGGER... ...AND THEN WE'LL START SHARING IT OUT!
ECONOMIC GROWTH
BE PATIENT... WAIT UNTIL THE CAKE.....
OH-FORGET IT!
ECONOMIC GROWTH

Update

CHA
地下鉄
SUBWAY

LISA TAYLOR / PANOS

Cutting class barriers

Japan's *Burakumin*, or 'untouchable class', say their conditions still need improvement and government assistance. The package of affirmative action and official assistance reforms implemented 28 years ago is being threatened with cutbacks after official claims that they are no longer needed. The Burakumin Liberation League (BLL) says conditions for their communities have improved. But they point out that discrimination still exists in areas such as marriage and employment. The average earnings of Burakumin are only 60 per cent of the national figure. The BLL says: 'Many still hide the fact that they are Burakumin. This proves that discrimination is still severe.'

Gareth Vaughan/Gemini News Service

More hot air

International agreements have left out an unnoticed greenhouse gas, fluoroform, which has a global-warming potency 10,000 times greater than carbon dioxide. After the Montreal Protocol, chemical corporations switched to using HCFC-22 as a substitute for ozone-eating CFCs. But producing HCFC-22 – for use in a range of products such as fridges, air-conditioning systems, computer disks and aircraft fuel pipes – emits fluoroform. The amount of fluoroform in the atmosphere has skyrocketed and is expected to increase by five per cent a year.

New Scientist No 2120

Forest fires

Last year more tropical forest burned around the world than any time in recorded history. Although the massive Indonesian fires made headlines, an investigation by a Brazilian Government committee estimates that in 1997 Amazon rainforest fires increased by more than 50 per cent over the previous annual rate. The Amazon loses around 51,800 square kilometres per year due to logging and fires. The report states that if measures are not taken now to protect it, in 50 years the entire Amazon will be gone.

Green Events, February 1998

HERBERT GIRADET / STILL PICTURES

FRAUD

Risky business

Crime gangs have a new weapon

SCORES of businesses in the West have been stung by African fraudsters tempting them with huge riches. Letters that appear ordinary, bearing Nigerian and Côte d'Ivoire stamps, are offering something extraordinary – millions of dollars, held illegally and awaiting transfer from Nigeria into the bank accounts of Western companies. The letters promise that if bank details of the firm and blank copies of their business letterheads are supplied, money will be lodged into the firm's bank account and a 25 to 50-per-cent handling commission will be paid to the firm. But the letter writer uses access to the Western company's bank account to withdraw huge sums of money or use the account for other illegal deals.

In Britain, this fraud has reached epidemic levels. British businesses lose an estimated annual $5.6 billion to West African fraudsters, with over 80,000 fake letters received last year. The gangs have infiltrated offices in Britain which give them access to sensitive papers and information. At the Treasury Solicitor's office in London, one worker was found using a fax machine to work a swindle. In the tax office a worker was found photocopying returns, cheques and headed notepaper to set up fake standing orders with banks.

One London company received a letter supposedly written by S Saro-Wiwa, the son of the executed Nigerian writer Ken Saro-Wiwa. The letter, posted from Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire, stated that before Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution by the Government of Nigeria, the Nigerian Military Head of State, General Sanni Abacha, had given him $3 million. The letter writer offered the British company a commission in exchange for allowing the use of its bank account.

In 1997 alone, some 68,000 letters were handed in or recovered by police. They believe that more than a million letters are sent to African and Western countries. National Criminal Intelligence Service Director-General John Abbott said: 'These criminals are heavily involved in fraud, exploiting individuals, companies and governments all over the world.'

***Newslink Africa*, Vol 16 No 7**

Quote

'Since my boss rings me almost every hour it gives me no time to think of an excuse for my unproductivity during the day.'

A Japanese insurance salesman, on the downside of his company-supplied mobile phone.

COMANDANTE
EN
JEFE
¡ORDENE!

On the cusp of change

Fidel Castro remains one of this century's towering political figures and the Cuban Revolution one of its longest-lasting socialist experiments. But change is in the air. **Wayne Ellwood** journeys to the island to take the pulse of Cuba today.

THE COSTA RICAN charter flight glides cautiously down the runway of Havana's José Martí International Airport, swings its nose in the direction of the terminal building and comes to a lurching stop. A smattering of applause breaks out from the tourists on board, refugees from the damp grey of a Canadian winter. Many of them have spent the last half hour changing into shorts and T-shirts, in anticipation of Cuba's balmy temperatures.

Business travellers in the first-class cabin have closed their murder mysteries and drained the last of their cocktails. Back in the economy section I slide my Spanish textbook into my knapsack and peer out the window, watching the ground crew scuttle alongside the baggage wagons. On the far side of the runway, emblazoned in a cursive-style type, an

DAVID GARTEN

enormous banner adorns one of the terminal buildings: *Creemos en la Revolución!* (We believe in the Revolution).

I've been a believer in the Cuban Revolution too, although at the moment I'm not exactly sure what I think about it. The island's been through major economic and political changes in the past decade with the fall of the Soviet Union and the loss of massive trade subsidies. Human rights activists have become more vocal. Tens of thousands of people have fled to the US in search of economic opportunities. And both foreign capital and foreign tourists are flocking to the place.

Faded grandeur: a former Miramar mansion.

VINCENZO PIETROPAOLO

Ever since Fidel Castro's 1959 Revolution Cuba has played a symbolic role on the global stage far beyond its size. For the American Right, Cuba has been an irritating reminder of communist tyranny and economic mismanagement. While on the Left the Cuban experiment has been a source of hope and inspiration for its commitment to social justice. In the Third World, progressive forces have seen Cuba as a shining example of selfless internationalism and real social progress. And in Latin America, Cuba's stubborn fight to remain independent of its powerful northern neighbour has been a courageous example of pluck and determination against overwhelming odds.

As a result of US bullying Cuba was more or less driven into the Soviet camp

There's no question the odds have been heavily stacked against this Caribbean island. For 40 years the US has done everything it can to topple the Castro Government, short of a direct invasion. As a result of this bullying Cuba was more or less driven into the Soviet camp, a liaison which probably did more to skew Cuba's development than the American economic blockade.

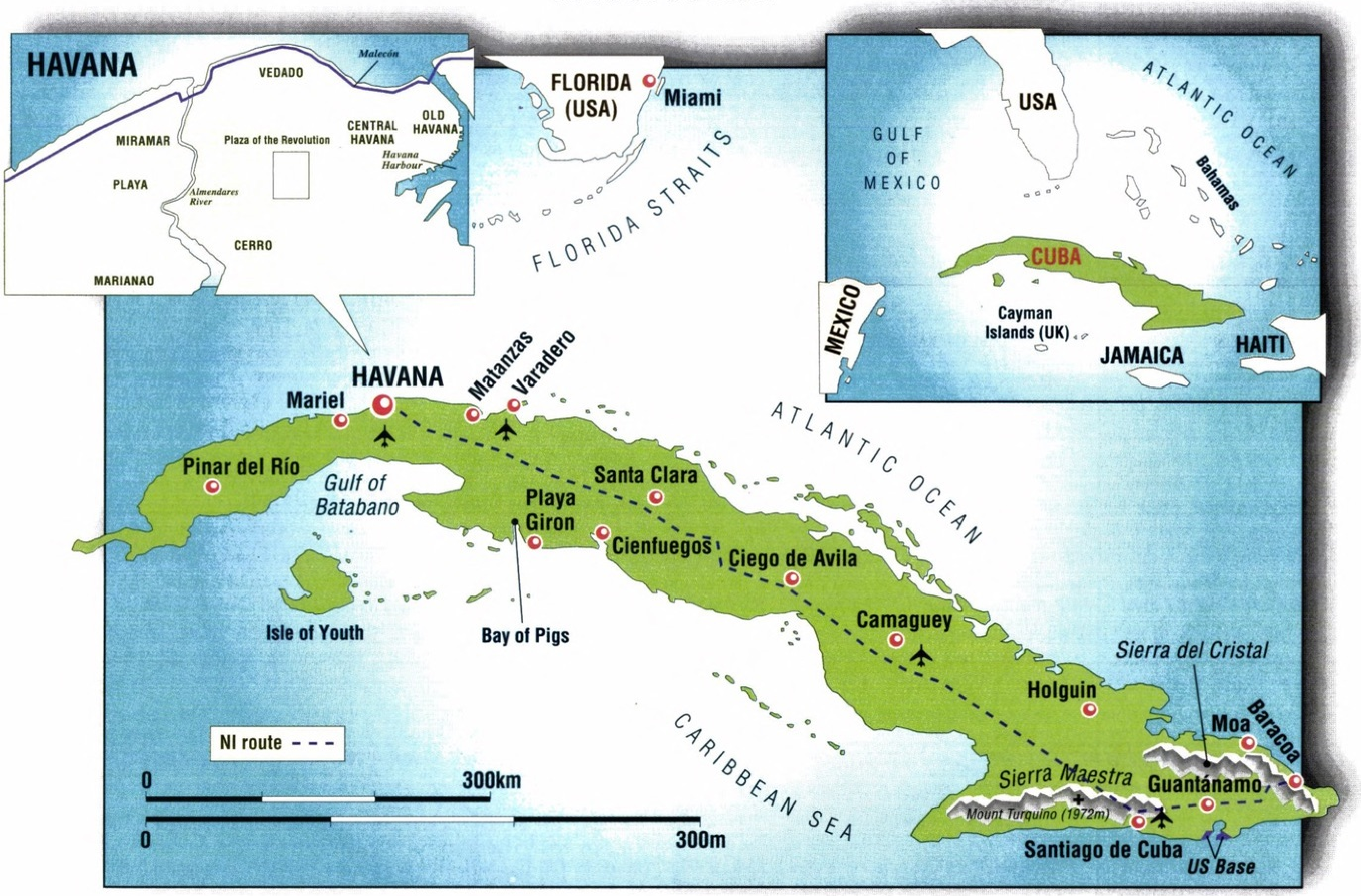
This isn't my first visit: I've been here with my family as a stressed-out, beach-bound tourist. But this time I've come as a journalist to try and gauge what it means to live in one of the world's last self-styled 'communist' countries on the cusp of change. I've never been much taken with communism but somehow Cuba was different. The high romance of a popular revolution combined with dramatic advances in social welfare by a regime under constant siege was a powerful mix.

For many it was living proof that the great socialist dream was still possible. A people could, through strength of will and self-sacrifice, take charge of their own destiny and re-make the world. But was that still the case? That was what I was hoping to get some sense of in the next month as I travelled through the country, talking with ordinary Cubans, government officials and Party militants.

I pass quickly through customs and immigration, then jump into a taxi to town, eager to get done with the business of registering with the International Press Centre in Vedado. En route we drive through the neighbouring municipality of Miramar, with its faux castles clad in marble, enormous mansions with Greek columns and ornate palace-like structures. It's my first glimpse of the kind of wealth that must have been here prior to 1959 and it is truly staggering. Today, many of these buildings

BURT GLINN / MAGNUM

Church and State: a youthful Fidel Castro chats with two nuns days after the defeat of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista by Castro's guerrilla forces.


HAVANA
VEDADO
Malecón
MIRAMAR
Plaza of the Revolution
CENTRAL HAVANA
OLD HAVANA
Havana Harbour
PLAYA
Almendares River
CERRO
MARIANAO
FLORIDA (USA)
Miami
FLORIDA STRAITS
USA
GULF OF MEXICO
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Bahamas
CUBA
MEXICO
Cayman Islands (UK)
JAMAICA
HAITI
HAVANA
Mariel
Matanzas
Varadero
Pinar del Río
Gulf of Batabano
Playa Giron
Santa Clara
Cienfuegos
Ciego de Avila
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Isle of Youth
Bay of Pigs
Camaguey
Sierra del Cristal
Holguin
Moa
Baracoa
Sierra Maestra
Guantánamo
Mount Turquino (1972m)
Santiago de Cuba
US Base
CARIBBEAN SEA
NI route
0
300km
0
300m

house embassies, schools, state enterprises, government offices and, as I learn later, not a few of the higher-ups in the Government and military. Others are derelict with caved-in roofs and overgrown with vegetation. Most of the original owners are gone, part of the vast exile community of two million Cubans who fled immediately after the Revolution and have left in sporadic waves since then.

The main thoroughfare, Avenida Cinco, suddenly dives through a tunnel under the Almendares River and we're cruising down La Rampa, a wide boulevard lined with post-World War Two office buildings and hotels. A few hundred metres farther is the Malecón, Havana's famous sea wall – popular with tourists and locals alike as a place to stroll, meet your friends and be seen.

Once I am finished with formalities at the Press Centre I head up the street to check out the Havana Libre Hotel, formerly the Havana Hilton. This was the first headquarters of Fidel Castro's revolutionary government and I was curious to have a look. Castro was only 33 years old when he came to power on 1 January 1959 after stampeding the brutal dictator Fulgencio Batista into exile. When Fidel arrived a week later after a victory march from Santiago de Cuba at the eastern end of the island, Habañeros (as the residents of Havana are known) in their thousands thronged the streets in a jubilant display of support for *los barbudos* (the bearded ones).

The Havana Libre is the city's largest hotel, a 32-story, 630-room monster built just before the Revolution for $24 million. The 25th-floor hotel bar is named after Mt Turquino, Cuba's highest peak. The Sierra Maestra mountain range west of Santiago de Cuba is the emotional heartland of the Revolution where the guerrillas first built their support among the rural *campesinos* (peasants). Today, 40 years on, Castro remains in power and the Turquino Bar is filled not with young idealists, but with foreign entrepreneurs and well-heeled tourists sipping *Cuba libres* (rum and cola).

After the Havana Libre I search out the Hotel Nacional, the former headquarters of US mafia kingpin 'Lucky' Luciano. It's an imposing hulk of marble and tropical hardwood where you can order $25-dollar lobster in the formal dining room – or listen to live music out back while sipping seven-year-old Cuban rum and watching the Atlantic breakers smash into the sea wall a few hundred metres away. On the walls in the bar are dozens of black-and- white photos chronicling the history of the hotel and the personalities who've stayed there – from Errol Flynn and Winston Churchill to Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner.

Entranced by the photos and curious to find out more about the Mafia connection I go to speak with Miguel Coyula, a hyperkinetic community activist and amateur historian with the *Grupo de Desarrollo Integral de la Ciudad* (Integrated Development Group of the City). We meet in the airy, two-story building which houses the *maqueta* of Havana, an enormous three-dimensional scale model of the city. Miguel bounces around the perimeter of the model with his laser pointer, detailing in rapid-fire English a passionate socio-economic history of the city which he clearly loves.

The model gives an instant overview of the city. The idea is that any proposed new building can first be built to scale so planners and developers can immediately see the impact of a project on its surroundings.

Habañeros in their thousands thronged the streets in jubilant support

'A few years ago, there was a plan to erect a 45-story skyscraper along the Malecón,' Miguel says. 'When we placed a model of the building into the maqueta you could see it would be a disaster. It was never built. There have been many offers to construct big glass boxes like that so we must be cautious or our beautiful city could be ruined.'

Looking at the model, the first impression is size: Havana covers a massive 50-kilometre by 20-kilometre rectangle. The second is height. It's a low-rise city with two-story buildings in the majority. The

An anti-Castro demonstrator in Miami makes her point. Wealthy, white Cubans were among the early wave of exiles to the US.

JACK KURTZ / IMPACT VISUALS

model is colour-coded so one can read the past, present and future of the city at a glance. Colonial buildings are in red and they are almost entirely concentrated in the old core. Buildings erected this century are in beige while new or unbuilt ones are in white. What's most striking is that you can immediately see that the bulk of the city was built in the last 90 years. When the sugar economy took off in the 1920s and 1930s, the new wealth concentrated in Havana and construction boomed. An eclectic range of architectural styles blossomed – from art nouveau and art deco to Spanish colonial and post-war modern.

'As the rich kept moving out from the centre they left behind a city untouched by new development.'

Miguel flashes a pencil-thin red beam at the model. 'You can see how this area of Vedado exploded with new buildings in the 1950s. That's when the Mafia money came flooding in. The idea was to turn Havana into a huge gambling city. By 1955, the gambling business here was making more money than Las Vegas. That building is the Riviera Hotel. It was built in 1957 and was owned by the American mobster Meyer Lansky.' (Next to the Riviera is the recently built Hotel Melia Cohiba, a sober reminder that the maqueta's visual lesson doesn't always work. This monstrosity, courtesy of a Spanish hotel chain, is exactly the kind of ostentatious bauble which Miguel hopes can be kept out of Havana.)

Later I find out that organized crime came to Cuba from the US to evade taxes and launder money. The mobsters operated with the full co-operation of the dictator, Batista. The Government collected 25,000 pesos from each casino as an initial payment, a fifth of all profits and a 2,000-peso monthly fee. Batista and his cronies creamed off millions while nearly a quarter of the population lived in poverty.

'Habañeros were sickened by the crime and the corruption,' said Miguel. 'The day after the Revolution there was a spontaneous invasion to destroy all the gambling houses and casinos.' ■

Flying pigeons and socialist slogans

A close-up look at life on the streets of Havana...

Cars – Havana is like an open-air museum with thousands of huge American cars from the 1940s and 1950s still plying the streets. When I was a kid in the Toronto suburb of Scarborough, part of boy culture was being able to identify a car's make and year by sight. Here, I found myself doing it again: there was a '53 Ford, over there a '58 Pontiac and disappearing around the corner, my favourite, the sleek lines of a '57 Chevy. One day an immaculate blue Edsel floated by and I craned my neck in disbelief as the 40-year old dinosaur lumbered past. Cubans clearly love their old American clunkers and it's a tribute to their ingenuity and guile that so many are still running.

Bikes – Since the loss of subsidized oil from the Soviet Union bike transport has been heavily promoted. There were 40,000 bikes in Havana in 1991. Now there are more than two million, many of them the tank-like 'Flying Pigeon' model built with Chinese help. The Government subsidizes the purchase price so that any Cuban can apply to buy a new bike through his or her workplace for 120 pesos ($5.20) which can be paid off in weekly instalments.

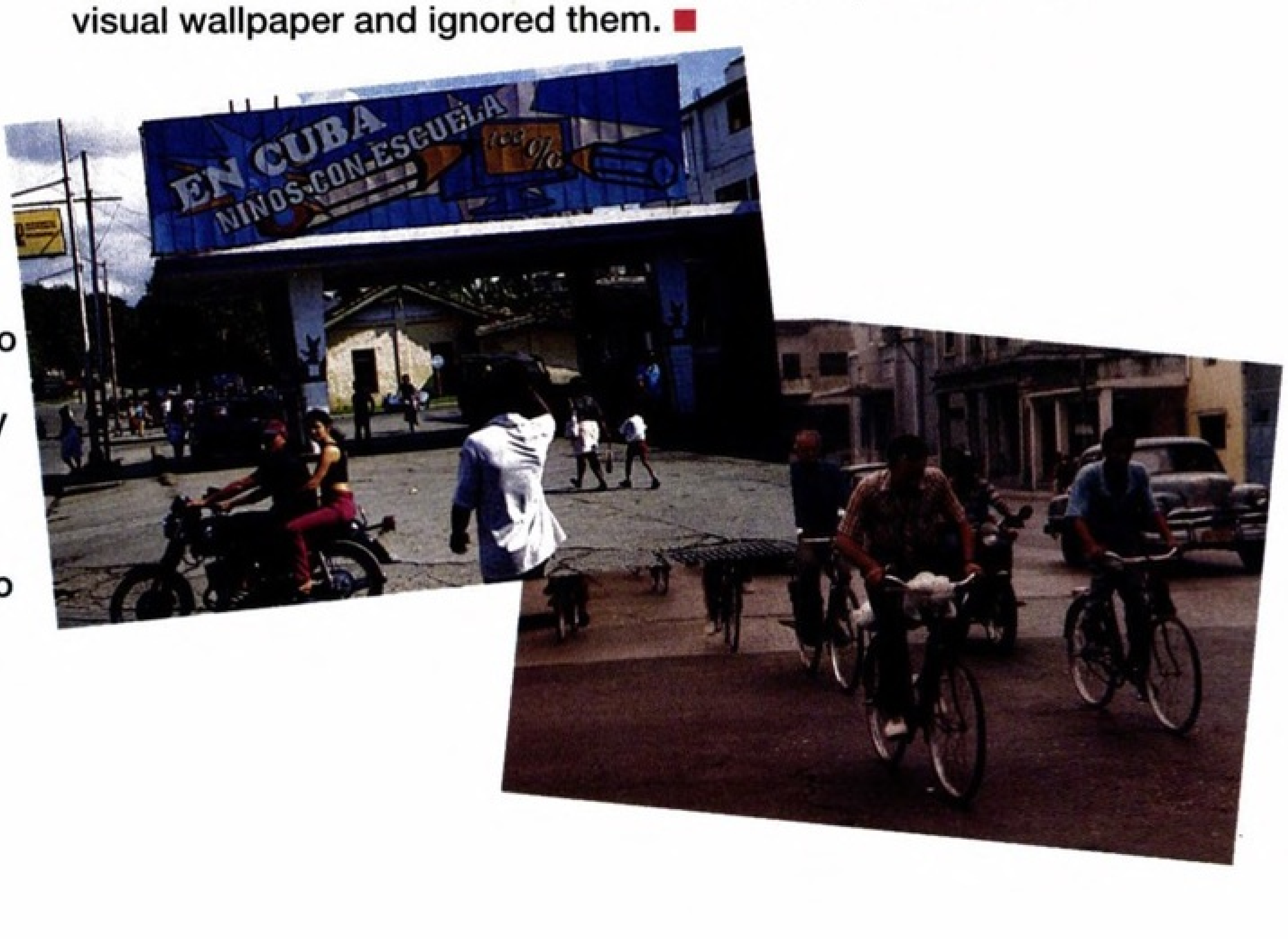
Cubans have taken to their bikes with enthusiasm. The city has built special bike lanes on key streets. If you want to travel to the beach in East Havana you can ride your two-wheeler onto the *Ciclobus*, a modified bus which takes 30 bikes and their riders through the tunnel under Havana Bay. There are also numerous bike garages where you can park your bike and have it guarded for a peso a day.

Ads and Slogans – Commercial advertising is almost non-existent. There are no signs or billboards for booze or laundry detergent, no store windows plastered with corporate logos. It was an unusual pleasure to stroll people-packed streets and not be assaulted by the siren call of consumption. However, Western corporate culture is not invisible. Benetton has recently opened a shop in a posh new mall and the Nike 'swoosh' is omnipresent on baseball hats and T-shirts.

Instead of ads there are political slogans: painted messages on brick walls or billboards erected at busy intersections. You can't travel far before you encounter an exhortatory message from the Government or the Communist Party (CPC). (In Cuba, the Party and the State are pretty much one and the same thing. Party militants dominate the upper echelons of power and the CPC is the only legal political party.)

Che Guevara's *Hasta la victoria siempre* (Until the final victory) is the most common slogan and his famous 'heroic guerrilla' portrait is everywhere. *Socialism o muerte* (Socialism or death) runs a close second. Fidel ends most of his public addresses with these words though in billboard form it's usually unattributed. To his credit Fidel has not made an icon of himself and it's rare to see his image or slogans credited to him.

I found the political slogans fascinating – ideology without disguise: crude, simple and direct. But I wondered about the confidence of a regime that feels the need to rouse popular support using such bald propaganda. And I was puzzled about its impact. Most Cubans I spoke with treated the political ads as visual wallpaper and ignored them. ■



DAVID GARTEN (TOP AND BOTTOM RIGHT); WAYNE ELLWOOD (BOTTOM LEFT).

The **meaning** of **Che**

ALBERTO KORDA (INSET): OSVALDO SALAS / REPORTAGE (TOP)

ERNESTO 'CHE' GUEVARA is a modern hero, a brooding, powerful symbol of selfless dedication to the poor and the oppressed. He was born into a middle-class Argentine family in 1928 and educated as a doctor.

Travelling through Latin America by motorcycle as a young man, he saw poverty first hand. He ended up in Guatemala where he witnessed a CIA-led coup against the mildly-reformist President Jacobo Arbenz. Later he joined up with a kindred spirit – Fidel Castro – in Mexico.

In Cuba, as part of Castro's guerrilla army, Che was known for his searing intellect, bravery and military prowess. Rising quickly to the rank of *Comandante,* he and Fidel soon became the heart and soul of the Revolution. A self-taught Marxist, and an important political theorist in his own right, his vision of social change was pure and uncompromising: 'I believe in the armed struggle as the only solution for people who fight to free themselves.'

He put his beliefs of the 'new socialist man' *[sic]* into practice, working around the clock. He was in his own words 'a self-sacrificing worker' able to give up 'his hours of rest, his personal tranquillity, his family or his life for the Revolution'.

As Cuba edged closer to the USSR, Che grew disillusioned with growing Soviet-style bureaucracy and the emergence of new élites. In 1965 he secretly quit Cuba, travelling to the Congo and then to Bolivia to foment armed rebellions.

His credo: 'The first duty of a revolutionary is to make the Revolution.' In October, 1967 he was captured and murdered by the Bolivian Armed Forces. An icon was born. ■

MISMA.
ETIQUETAS.
Moneda de Cuba
Cuban Mints
AQUI SE OFERTA SERVICIO ADICIONAL
AQUI SE OFERTA
BODEGA
MI SALSA
ME ENCANTA QUE TE ENCANTEN MIS ENCANTOS

DAVID GARTEN

Slim pickings in the 'special period'

A visit to a *bodega* and an economics lesson...

MY FRIEND Susan and I are laboriously cleaning rice. The smooth, black kitchen countertop is the perfect spot to pick out the tiny pebbles, bits of husk and dirt. We don't bother with the microscopic white creatures which keep emerging during our work; they leave on their own, desperately scurrying away from our probing fingers.

We've just come back from her neighbourhood *bodega,* the state-run ration store which is a short five-minute walk away. Cubans have lived with food rationing since 1962 and the daily trip to the bodega is as much a part of life as rum and tobacco. In fact both are 'on the *libreta'*, the ration book which must be presented to the bodega clerk. The young man who first serves us appears to be trying to arrange a date for Saturday night so we wait until his colleague fills the plastic bags we've brought. She pushes them back to us and then scratches in the libreta a record of what's been purchased, at what price and on what date.

Today the pickings are meagre: 500 grams of beans, 500 grams of rice, two small buns, 500 grams of sugar and a litre of rum. The rice is Vietnamese and the quality abysmal. Rice and black beans are a staple and *congris* (a mixture of the two popularly known as 'Moors and Christians') is standard fare from one end of the country to the other. The island does grow rice but the projected harvest of 165,000 tons last year fell well short of the 600,000 tons necessary to satisfy current demand. Forty per cent of the nearly $700 million the country spent in 1996 to import food was used to buy rice. The irony is that high-quality Cuban rice is exported for hard currency and the cheaper, low-grade stuff imported. The Government is attempting to boost production by encouraging small farmers and co-operatives to adopt traditional (and less expensive) techniques of planting rice in small dry plots. But there's a lot of lost production to make up. Harvests at the gigantic state farms fell by as much as 75 per cent after supplies of fuel, fertilizer and pesticides from the Soviet Bloc were cut off in the early 1990s.

The same situation holds for coffee as for rice, a predicament which causes Cubans even more consternation. Coffee, an important social lubricant, is almost a sacrament. In the relentless search for foreign exchange, the best coffee from the Oriente (the eastern tip of the island) is exported, cheaper stuff imported and then mixed with chickpea flour. Everyone seems to know this but it still rankles.

The monthly rations from the State for a family of four cost around 50 pesos ($2.15), almost a quarter of the average salary of 214 pesos ($9.30). Food from the bodega is not enough to live on and no-one, neither the Government nor the people, pretends it is. It may take you halfway through the month, but no more.

But despite the shortages, people don't seem to hold the Government responsible. Rationing has been around so long it's an accepted part of daily life. And for the most part Cubans sympathize with the State's

Tipping the scales: queuing up for food at a Government-run ration shop.

efforts to distribute available food as fairly as possible. The last eight years, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, have been a time of belt-tightening and suffering. But the consensus is that the problem is a national one, which all Cubans need to work on together to solve.

In order to understand why the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc was such a hammer blow to the economy I visit George Carriazo, the Director of CIEM (the Centre for the Investigation of the Global Economy), one of a number of quasi-autonomous think-tanks whose job is to analyze and consult on Government economic policy. His modest office is on the second floor of a crumbling mansion on Avenida Cinco. The paint is faded and the ceiling plaster flaking but Carriazo himself is gracious and welcoming. He is a patient fellow with impeccable English and a clear fix on his country's economic problems.

'We lost 85 per cent of our foreign trade with the breakdown of the Soviet Union,' he tells me. I knew that Cuba had been dependent on exports to the Soviets but I hadn't realized just *how* dependent. Almost all Cuban sugar went to the Communist Bloc and in return the island imported two-thirds of its food, nearly all its oil and 80 per cent of its machinery and spare parts from the same countries.* 'Suddenly eight billion dollars in trade with the Soviet Bloc vanished. You can imagine the crisis we faced.'

With the benefit of hindsight I ask him whether it was not just a tad naive to put all your eggs in one basket. 'You have to consider the historical moment,' he explains. 'The Americans were refusing to trade with us, we desperately needed stable economic relations and that's what the Soviets offered. With their huge market they could take everything we could produce. But it was not just an economic decision, it was a political, military and strategic decision too. And now that it's ended we must move forward.'

When the Soviets pulled the plug the Cuban economy went into free fall. From 1989 to 1993, the island's gross domestic product (GDP) fell by half, from $19.3 to $10 billion. When Moscow scrapped its oil-for-sugar barter deal with Castro, the country lost most of its petroleum supplies overnight. Imports fell by a devastating 75 per cent – much of that was food, spare parts, agro-chemicals and industrial equipment.

The impact on living standards was crippling. Without oil the economy fizzled. Industrial production fell to just 15 per cent of capacity. Factories closed, public transport collapsed, the oil-fired plants which supply electricity operated sporadically. Power cuts of up to ten hours a day, which Cubans call *apagones*, became commonplace and even the supply of fresh water was disrupted. Agriculture and food production were paralyzed. Without transport, produce rotted in the fields. Tractors and mechanical harvesters broke down and couldn't be repaired. The sugar harvest (then Cuba's top foreign-exchange earner) plummeted from 8.4 million tons in 1990 to 4.2 million tons in 1993. In the same year, at the height of the crisis, Cuba was spending 60 per cent of its import bill on food and oil.

The years since 1989 are known as the 'special period', a time when the Cuban people have had to figure out a way of coping with this massive economic dislocation. The State moved dramatically to restructure the economy. In essence it adopted its own, self-imposed structural-adjustment program – without prodding from the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank. (Cuba is not a member of either organization so there wouldn't have been much chance of that anyway.)

The chill winds of economic globalization are blowing across the last redoubt of the Soviet-style command economy. The burning question is whether Cuba can change quickly enough to survive or whether it will see the achievements of the Revolution eroded by the cut-throat global economy. ■

The US blockade

The Americans saw the withdrawal of Soviet subsidies in 1989 as an opportunity to administer a coup de grâce to the Castro regime.

US Trade Embargo: Launched in 1960 when the US first moved to punish Cuba economically for its socialist policies. Two years later Washington stopped all trade in food and medicine and prohibited aid to any country which traded with Cuba.

Cuban Democracy Act (CDA): Introduced by Senator Robert Torricelli in 1992, this bill extended the trade ban to overseas subsidiaries of US companies. Any ship landing in Cuba is barred from docking in US ports for six months. Cuba had $800 million in trade (mostly in food and medicine) with American-owned firms *outside* the US. That trade has disappeared and transport costs have jumped by 40 per cent since 1992. Cuba is spending $100 million more to get goods through alternative channels.

¡ABAJO EL BLOQUEO YANQUI!
SOLIDARIDAD CON CUBA
¡Cuba Sí!

ABBAS / MAGNUM

Cuba Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (Helms-Burton Law): Bill passed in March, 1996 which pleased the right-wing, anti-Castro Cuban exile community in Florida and led to charges of extra-territorial meddling from US allies. The law aims to staunch foreign investment in Cuba by threatening to take to court in the US companies that 'traffic' in property nationalized by the Castro government that was previously owned by anyone who is now a citizen of the US.

Helms-Burton has outraged Canada and the European Union (EU), both of whom seek stronger trade links and investment opportunities in Cuba. The EU has threatened to take the bill to the World Trade Organization unless Washington softens its approach. ■

BODEGA BLACKBOARD

Monthly ration per person at subsidized prices. Supplies vary regionally. Meat is rare and in some areas comes only once or twice a year.

3 kgs of rice
3 kgs of sugar
500 g of beans
200 g salt
1 kg fish
400 g (chicken or beef)
14 eggs
1 tube toothpaste (per family of 4)
1 bar hand soap, 1 bar laundry soap every two months
Limited quantities of tobacco, rum and coffee

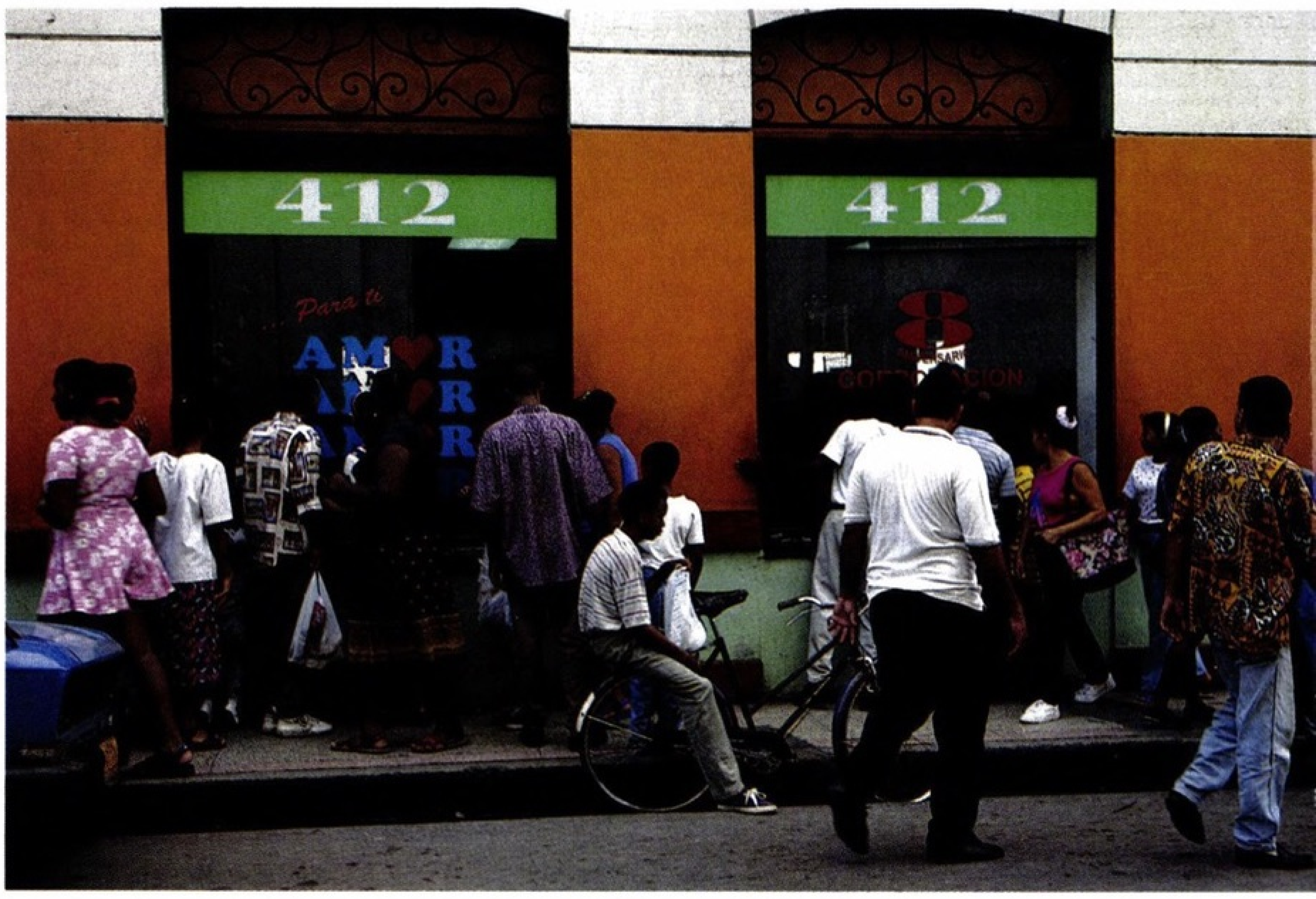
---

* *'The Cuban Economy in the 1990s: From Crisis to Recovery'* by Eugenio Espinosa Martinez, *Carta Cuba*, Facultad Latino Americana de Ciencias Sociales, University of Havana, 1997.

THE UNITED STA
THIS NOTE IS LEGAL TENDER
FOR ALL DEBTS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
B3
C
08012E

The great dollar chase

Market reformsand growing inequality...



Window shopping: crowds check out what's on offer at this state-operated 'dollar store' in Santiago de Cuba.

PHOTOS: WAYNE ELLWOOD

CAPITALISM has come to Cuba, warts and all. The question is how much its impact can be buffered. Ever the pragmatist, President Castro himself has admitted that some movement towards the market economy is 'the only alternative for saving the Revolution and socialism'. And indeed the country has introduced a bundle of free-market measures over the past six years – from lifting the laws against self-employment to bringing bottom-line business practices to state-run companies. But there have been other radical changes, too.

Take foreign investment. President Castro once said that relying on foreign capital to build Cuba's economic future would be 'like curing cancer with mercurochrome'. Well, times change. Today foreign investment is seen as a quick fix.

In the last few years investment rules have been loosened to allow 100-per-cent foreign ownership. Investments are fully protected and companies allowed to repatriate profits in hard currency. Joint ventures with the State are encouraged (though no outside investment is allowed in healthcare or education). In the last two years the State has begun to develop a classic Third World plan to attract foreign capital: free trade zones (FTZs). Currently there are three zones under development in the Havana region and another is planned for Cienfuegos on the south coast.

Silvia Castañer, one of the designers of the free-trade policy, is convinced the island will benefit from the move. She is a tall, no-nonsense bureaucrat with tired-looking eyes, and this morning she appears slightly harrassed. Somehow the Press Centre has neglected to confirm our interview and she obviously has ten other things to do. Still, she agrees to continue. We settle down to the customary cups of Cuban coffee and she begins: 'We studied free-trade zones in more than 30 different countries, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean and I think we've come up with the best possible law.' Government planners hope the FTZs will boost trade, stimulate local business and spin-off some badly needed jobs. Castañer believes the initiative could create 20,000 new positions over the next decade.

But it is clear from the details of the policy that the big winners will be foreign companies. Goods brought into the zones from within Cuba or from abroad are duty free. Investors also get a generous tax holiday: for manufacturers there are no taxes on profits or labour for the first 12 years with a 50-per-cent reduction for five years afterwards. Che Guevara, an implacable opponent of foreign capital, must be spinning in his grave.

Both investors and the Government benefit from the labour deal. The State acts as a broker supplying workers under contract to companies in the zones. Cuban workers are by Latin American standards highly trained and educated. They are also tightly controlled. Strikes are illegal. According to Silvia Castañer, workers in the free-trade zones will receive an average wage of 150-200 pesos ($6.50-$8.70) a month for a 5 1/2 day week. Investors negotiate wages with the Government from $1.10 to $6.00 an hour depending on the job. All the dollars end up in State coffers; the workers are paid in pesos. The Government can afford to give away the shop and it still comes out ahead.

But the change which had the biggest immediate impact on living standards was the legalization of the dollar. Before August 1993 it was a crime for Cubans to hold

TES OF AMERICA
C 88308012 E
WASHINGTON, D.C.
3

dollars despite the fact that up to $450 million flowed into the country from exiles living abroad, largely in the US (recent figures from the Latin American Economic Commission peg the figure at around $800 million a year). Rather than shunt dollars into the black market the Government in a brilliant tactical move decided to capture this hard currency to help pay for scarce imports.

The upshot is that Cuba now has two legal economies: one in pesos and one in dollars. You can see the results all over the country. One of the first things the State did was to set up a chain of 600 'dollar shops' where people can buy consumer goods like clothing, pens, TVs, radios, sweets and other items unavailable elsewhere.

You can identify a dollar store by the boisterous crowds queuing up to get inside, anxiously clutching their greenbacks. In contrast, stores selling goods for pesos are desultory places with little on offer and few customers. I awake one morning in the old city of Santiago de Cuba at the south-east end of the island to a huge crowd milling around outside my hotel. Thinking there had been a robbery or an accident I poke my head out the window only to discover the source of the hubbub. A shipment of flashy, plastic digital wall clocks has arrived and the word has spread fast. At six dollars each they are clearly a bargain and people are snapping them up.

Inside the shop, business is booming. Women in sandals and hair curlers are flipping through the garment racks, casting a discriminating eye at eight dollar blue jeans from China and six dollar blouses from Pakistan. A few aisles over a young couple is sizing up a Korean 'boom box'. Near the exit a modern cooler shelters imported soft drinks, beer and mineral water: four young sophisticates sit at one of the two available tables, an island of calm in the midst of a maelstrom, clutching cold cans of Danish lager.

Necessary or not, the legalization of the dollar has driven a huge wedge into socialist notions of equality. Cubans who have access to dollars are clearly better off than those without and resentment is growing among those left out.

Holding American currency used to carry an anti-revolutionary stigma. You couldn't be loyal both to the Revolution and to the dollar. When that changed the most dedicated Government supporters suddenly looked like fools. Your value and well-being are no longer determined by your social contributions as a citizen but by how many dollars you can corral in a month. Policy-makers recognize the growing inequality as a big problem for the Government. But the only solution being offered is to make more dollars available to more Cubans.

Alfonso Casanova Montero, the country's Vice-Minister of the Economy and Planning is unapologetic about the move. He points out that US dollars were already in circulation and the Government simply made the trade legal. Casanova is a clean-shaven, dapper man in his early forties with a precise, professorial manner. We are sitting across from each other at an enormous, polished wood table in the Ministry's third-floor meeting room, a tray of foil-wrapped chocolates between us. He clasps and unclasps his hands slowly as he speaks, his scribbled notes to the questions I'd already submitted at the ready.

'Legalizing the dollar has brought some undesirable social and economic stratification,' he says in the careful technocratic tones of an economist. 'But it is also inevitable. The alternative, a devaluation of the peso, would have been even worse. It would have triggered severe inflation at a time when we were trying to attract foreign investment. With the few options we had, the legalization of the dollar seemed to be the most positive.'

Officials estimate that 50 to 70 per cent of Cubans have access to dollars in one way or another, whether through the tourism industry or via remittances from abroad. The Government has also introduced a 'dollar incentive' plan for workers in foreign joint ventures or export industries like fishing or mining. The more they produce, the more dollars they can earn.

A taxi driver can earn 10 times more than a brain surgeon, a tour guide 20 times more than a teacher

Take the 1,680 workers at Sherritt International's nickel mine in Moa on the Atlantic coast near the eastern end of the island. The Toronto-based Sherritt corporation is the single biggest foreign investor in Cuba, with money in nickel, oil and tourism. Miners at Sherritt's Moa operation earn around 330 pesos ($14.35) a month, already a hefty salary by Cuban standards. But they can also earn up to $100 a month in production bonuses, putting them among the wealthiest in the country. These incentives were introduced to staunch the haemorrhage of workers into the dollar economy. But they rarely apply to white-collar workers or civil servants where the inequalities are even more glaring. A taxi driver can earn 10 times more than a brain surgeon, a tour guide 20 times more than a teacher or a nurse. The State has plans to claw back dollars through taxation, though at this point

'Feels a bit soft to me': bargaining for tomatoes in one of the new farmers' markets.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
THIS NOTE IS LEGAL TENDER FOR ALL DEBTS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
C 88308012 E
C 88308012 E
3
3
C
B

that is still wishful thinking. Meanwhile, those living a peso lifestyle look with envy on their dollar-flush neighbours.

The notion of social equality lies at the heart of the Revolution and is the reason why the majority of Cubans still support Fidel Castro and his administration. But, as Marxists would say, the contradictions are growing and the Government's legitimacy on this issue is looking increasingly threadbare.

Along with changes in foreign-investment policy there have been reforms to stimulate food production. Private farmers' markets were set up with prices determined by supply and demand rather than by government planners.

Like the dollar stores, these open *agropecuarios* were an immediate success. There are now hundreds across the country including most small towns. All the markets I visit whether in Santiago, Guantánamo or Havana are packed with energetic buyers and sellers haggling in time-honoured fashion. And the range of produce is impressive – pineapples, oranges, papayas, bananas, tomatoes, lettuce, rice, beans, yucca, garlic, slabs of freshly-butchered pork and much more. All for sale in pesos.

'These agropecuarios have helped a lot,' says Pedro, a 23-year-old customs worker. It is the middle of a busy Tuesday afternoon in the market in Miramar. I am puzzling over which papaya to buy and seeing my consternation, he's offered advice. 'Before there was only the black market,' he explains. 'There wasn't as much food and it was expensive and illegal. This is better. The people have more choice and there is more food.'

DAVID GARTEN

Both the legalization of the dollar and the new farmers' markets have helped put a brake on the black market which was expanding rapidly in the early 1990s and threatening the economic stability of the country. Driven by serious shortages, the 'unofficial' price of food and other basics like kerosene, cooking oil and cement had skyrocketed. At the same time demoralized workers were diverting more and more foodstuffs and other controlled consumer goods from the state-run supply system into the black market. By one estimate in 1994 a third of the food destined for Havana from state farms disappeared into the black market. The Cuban peso began to sink like a stone, bottoming out at 160 pesos to the dollar in mid-1993 as more and more business took place outside the 'official' economy.

With the arrival of dollar stores and the agropecuarios people finally had a place to spend both their dollars and their accumulated pesos. And there were a lot of loose pesos floating around. Normally, when production falls in a market economy there are fewer things to buy and inflation increases. But not in Cuba. Basic foodstuffs on the libreta continued to be sold at fixed, affordable prices; salaries were guaranteed and continued to be paid. The only problem was that, apart from monthly rations at the bodega, there was almost nothing to buy.

The result was what economists call a monetary 'overhang' – lots of cash piling up and nowhere to spend it. Now Cubans could convert their pesos to dollars and spend them in the dollar stores or they could spend them directly on meat and vegetables in the new markets.

Within a year a pound of black beans fell from nearly 50 pesos on the black market to 10 pesos; a pound of pork which sold for as much as 300 pesos fell to 25 to 30 pesos a pound. And most black market foodstuffs were available in the farmers' markets for only a few pesos more. As a result of these reforms the national currency slowly regained value, reaching a high of 23 pesos to the dollar last November.

The gradual availability of more food in the cities also gave some much-needed elbow room to the Government. But the problem of food security has not disappeared. There are still food shortages and many people are just scraping by. Average nutrition levels, which dropped by a third in the early 1990s, have rebounded. But protein consumption has still not regained UN-recommended minimum levels. That being said, there is not the crippling hunger visible elsewhere in Latin America. Despite the shortages, no-one is starving.

There are no children with the distended bellies of poverty. That alone makes Cuba unique. Considering both the external pressures and the dramatic changes the country has experienced in recent years it is an amazing accomplishment. ■

DIY jobs

Manuel Rodriguez is one of Cuba's new self-employed. He sells used books from a street stall on the Plaza de Armas in Havana Viejo, the beautifully restored colonial centre of the city.

'I graduated as an electronics technician but I gave that up a few years ago,' Manuel says. In his hand he is cradling a couple of morocco-bound volumes dating back to the 1830s, which he is eager to show me. He also has a selection of old periodicals, all of which he sells for dollars, mostly to Spanish and Italian tourists.

'When I quit the factory I was earning 265 pesos a month and the exchange rate was 160 pesos to the dollar. It was impossible. Now it's a dignified living,' he says, handing me a 1958 copy of *Life* magazine. 'I pay $22.50 a month plus 100 pesos to the State for my licence and I pay to rent space on the street. I make enough to pay my expenses and buy what I need for my family. This suits me because I love books and it is legal.'

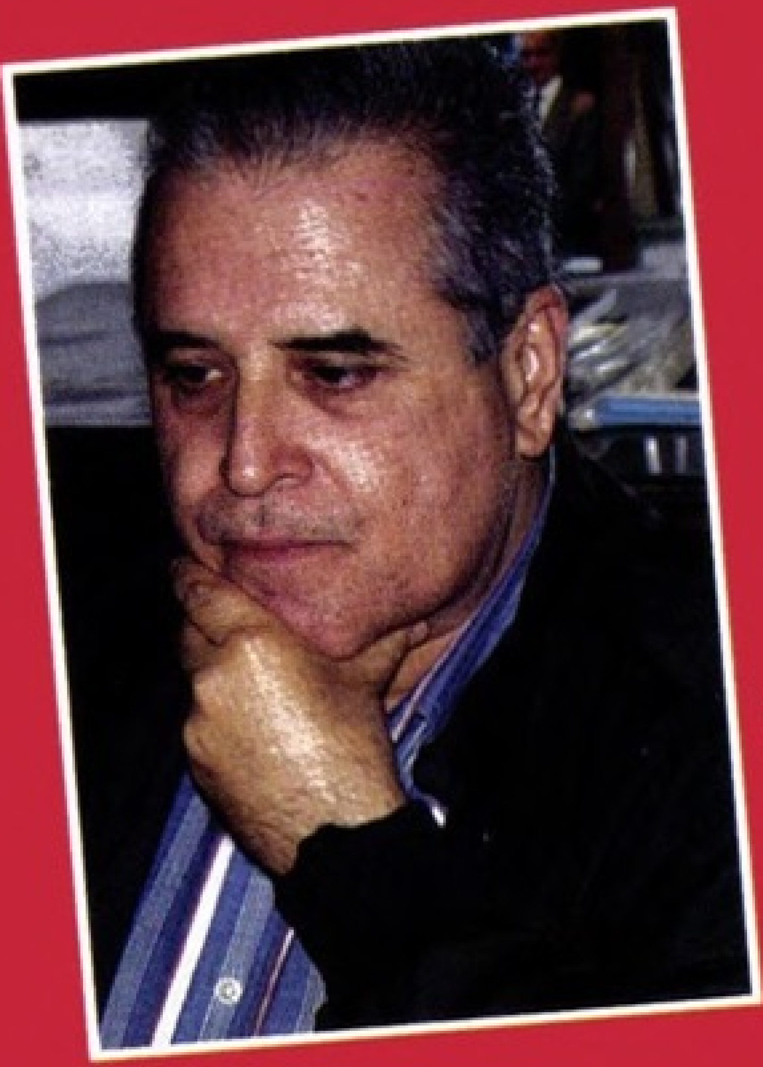
But not all of the new self-employed are as content as Manuel. The Government's opening to small business has been reluctant and there are lots of complaints. For example, the State now allows small private restaurants called *paladars,* a relief for visitors since Government-run eateries are usually over-priced and poorly supplied. But no paladar is allowed more than 12 chairs, employees must be family members or relatives only, licence fees are stiff and all inputs must be purchased in dollars. Inspectors make surprise visits and receipts must be kept for proof of purchase.

WAYNE ELLWOOD

Manuel Rodriguez: 'A dignified living'.

Manuel also says he must show statements on a weekly basis to a state inspector to account for his sales and he'll have to pay a ten-per-cent tax on profits at year end. But that doesn't seem to bother him. He seems to be revelling in his new-found independence. 'Now I'm trying to analyze my market,' he confides. 'I want to find out what appeals to people. I need this market sense to get ahead.' ■

Keeping the lid on dissent



WAYNE ELLWOOD

ELIZARDO SANCHEZ is Cuba's best-known human-rights dissident, head of the *Comision Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional* (Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation). He has spent eight-and-a-half of the last 20 years in jail for his outspoken views. Wayne Ellwood spoke to him at his home in Havana.

What kind of leeway do you have to work on human-rights issues here in Cuba?

Despite the peaceful nature of our work the Government refuses legal recognition of our group. We're prohibited from having a computer, a fax machine, a photocopier and other office equipment. In fact, we can't really have offices. We have to work in our houses. This house has been subject to police searches, assaults and stone throwings by the authorities or their collaborators on ten different occasions over the past 18 years.

Why doesn't the Government permit opposing political views?

For the same reason North Korea, China, Romania and East Germany didn't permit different opinions. But there is an important difference. In those countries socialism arrived with a red flag flying over a tank. Here there was a profound, broadly-based popular revolution. We ended up with a government which is a hybrid between the totalitarian model of Eastern Europe and the *caudillismo* (strong-man) model of Latin America. This explains the strength of the Cuban Government and its enormous capacity for social control – whether by means of repression or propaganda. It's like a system of interlocking tiles in our society which is capable of observing every individual person. That is why people are almost defenceless and unable to respond to this Government. It's like having your hands tied.

Do you think the Government would win open, multi-party elections?

This Government maintains a broad base of popular support. Nonetheless, I believe if free elections were held the Government would be defeated and that's the main reason they don't do it. Personally, I believe we shouldn't have elections in the short term. The country is not prepared to live through the shock at the level of either the political or economic order. We need a gradual and orderly transition.

What kinds of pressures are there on human-rights activists here?

As soon as you raise any kind of objection to the Government you are declared a non-person. Because the Government controls all employment the first consequence is that you lose your job. This happened to me in 1968. I was a professor of Marxist philosophy at the University of Havana. There was a small-scale 'cultural revolution' then, a wave of ideological intolerance against thinkers who questioned the orthodox Stalinist approach of the time. The same fate happened to many hundreds of others.

Is it your feeling that the Government seems to be opening up economically but not politically?

The Government doesn't want any kind of real economic reform; it makes changes because they are convenient. Take the legalization of the dollar. That satisfied the Government's own desperate need for dollars. First to finance its machinery of repression and propaganda. And second to finance certain minimum conditions of life for the population, but only at the level of subsistence. We have a totalitarian system of state ownership and that's the reason why each day we are more poor. If Karl Marx were living in Cuba today he would have been shot or imprisoned because Marx would have been saying that the Government needs to liberate the forces of production. The Government doesn't recognize this necessity and that's the main reason we've had a system of rationing for the past 35 years.

Do you think the US Embargo is helping or hurting the human-rights cause in Cuba?

There needs to be an immediate lifting of economic sanctions by the United States, beginning with the sale of food and medicine. In my view it is immoral, inhuman and illegal to deny Cuba the possibility of buying food and medicine in our closest market. Powerful political forces in Miami and Washington say the blockade will bring 'liberty and democracy' to Cuba. I don't know of one case in world history where killing people with hunger or preventing them from treating their sick has brought democracy and happiness.

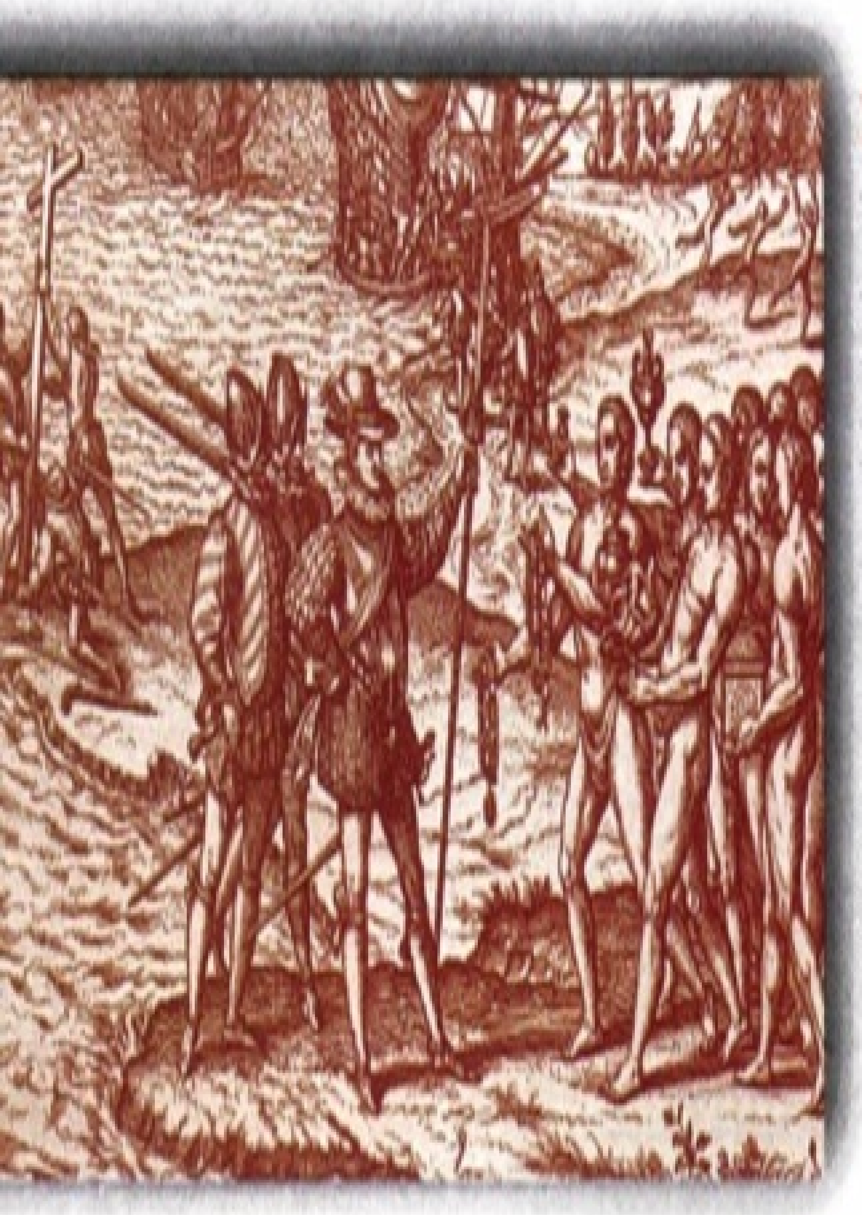
Can you describe the current situation of human-rights dissidents here?

We have more space than we did five years ago. But we've paid a very high price with all the years of repression. Our investigation shows that Cuba has the highest number of prisoners of conscience in Latin America in proportion to the size of its population The majority are in for common crimes but there are 500-700 political prisoners and thousands of others accused of *peligrosidad social* (social dangerousness). They're jailed on the basis of a police accusation for a period of up to four years – without proof, without witnesses and usually without a defence lawyer. In 1959 there were 12 prisons here, now there are more than 300. Why? Because the totalitarian model needs many prisons and a big repressive apparatus to maintain social control.

So what can be done to improve human rights in Cuba?

We're committed to a peaceful formula of transition, a process of national reconciliation that includes all Cubans with the current Government as the main protagonist. Inside Cuba I believe the human- rights movement, other dissident political groups and the churches support this. Unfortunately, conservatives in Washington and in the exile community in Miami don't. Nor does the Government of Cuba. For recommending this process we are attacked from both sides. The Government says I and my *compañeros* are paid by Washington and the CIA. And the radical exiles in Miami say we're paid by Fidel. In the end nobody pays us. We're completely independent. ■

CUBA a brief history



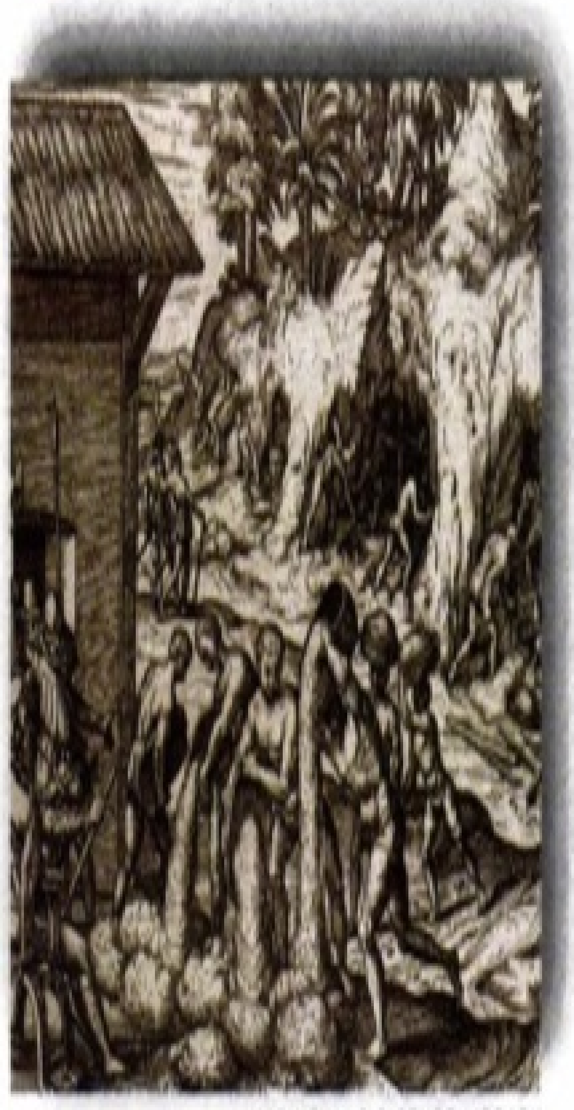
MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

1. Before the conquest

THE SIBONEY, HUNTER/GATHERERS from South America, were the first people in Cuba around 3,000 years ago. They were followed by the Taino, an Arawak tribe who settled most of the Caribbean islands as well as the northern edge of South America. By the time Christopher Columbus reached Cuba on 27 October 1492 the fiercer Taino had driven the Siboney to the western tip of the island. When the Europeans arrived there were an estimated half-million indigenous people living in small villages farming maize, yucca , yams, peanuts, avocados and tobacco. ◆

2. Occupation

THE SPANISH OCCUPATION began in 1514 when Diego Velasquez landed near Guantánamo Bay with 300 men. There were soon pitched battles with Hatuey, a Taino chief who had fled neighbouring Hispaniola where he had witnessed Spanish atrocities. Hatuey was eventually burned at the stake, refusing to be converted to Christianity. Velasquez eventually established seven new settlements and an *encomienda* system which gave the colonizers land and Indian labour in return for teaching them Christian ways. Smallpox, brutal treatment and malnutrition quickly decimated the natives. Thousands committed suicide rather than submit to the Spaniards. In 1542 the encomienda system was abolished but by 1570 the entire indigenous population had been wiped out. ◆

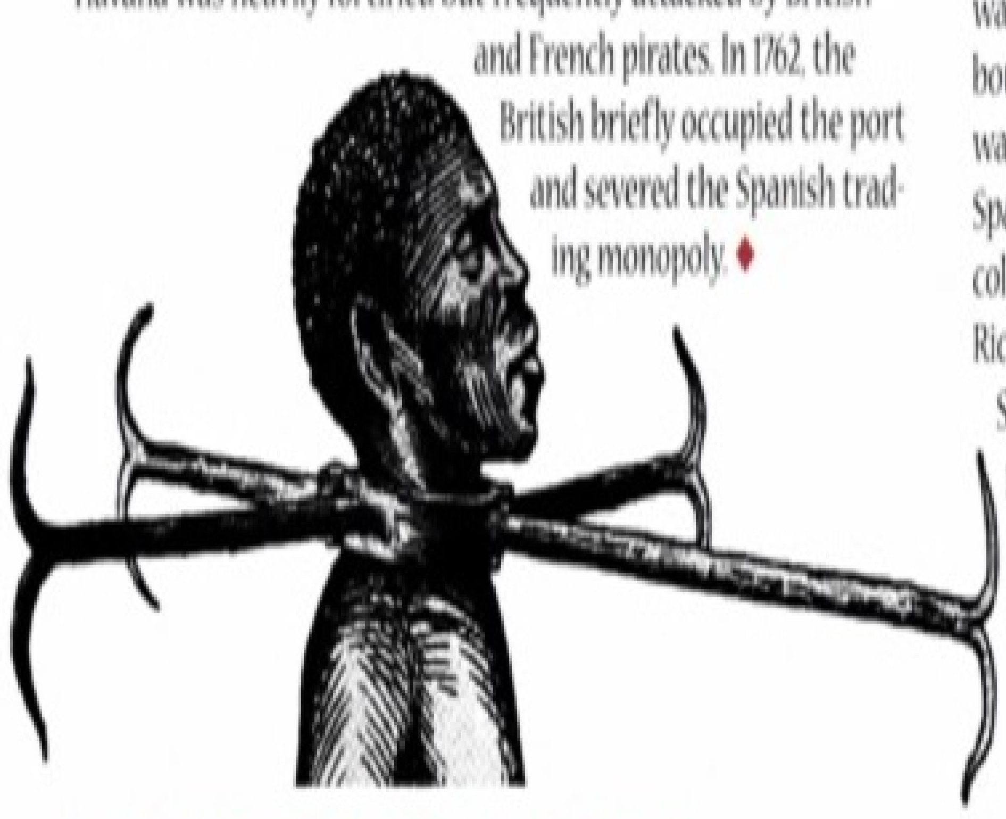


MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

3. Slavery and plunder

THE FIRST AFRICAN SLAVES were brought to work the mines and plantations in 1522. Blacks were allowed to stay together in tribal groupings, a move which allowed African culture to develop strong roots. Sugar cane was first planted in 1512 but a native plant, tobacco, became the first important commercial crop.

The Spanish soon ignored Cuba in favour of Mexico, Bolivia and Peru. But because of its strategic position the island became a staging point for the shipment of colonial plunder to Spain. Havana was heavily fortified but frequently attacked by British and French pirates. In 1762, the British briefly occupied the port and severed the Spanish trading monopoly. ◆



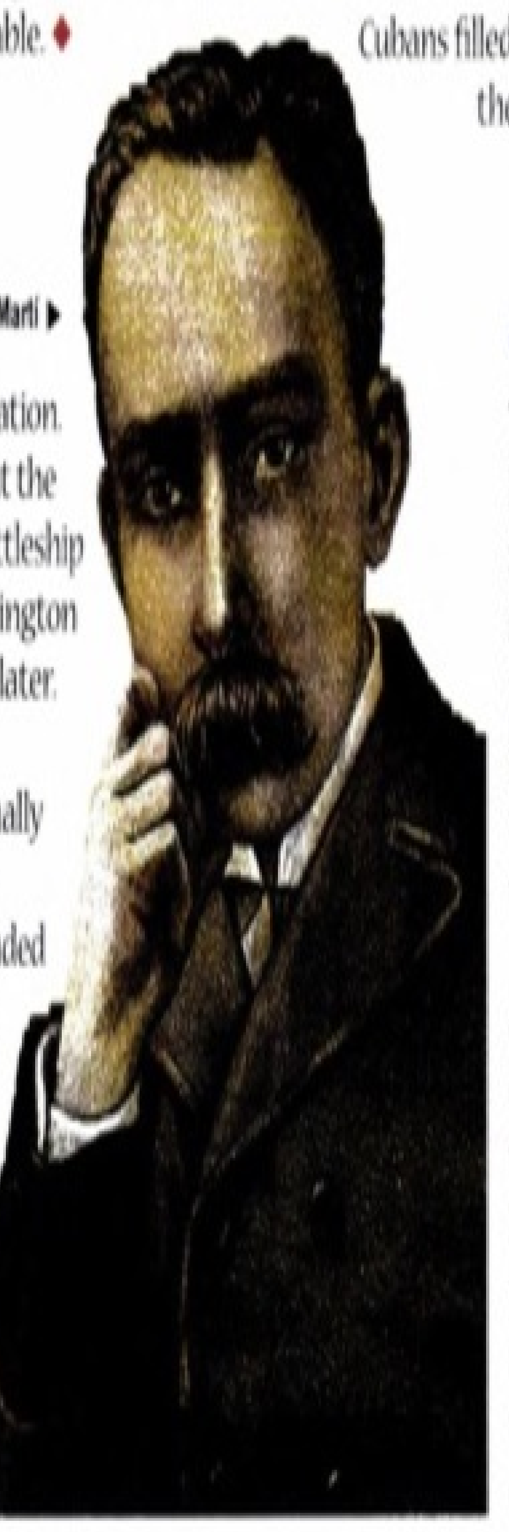
4. King sugar

THE SUGAR INDUSTRY exploded after 1791 when French planters fled a slave revolt in Haiti and settled in Cuba. Sugar cane rapidly blanketed the island and 700,000 Africans were imported over the next 40 years, eventually outnumbering whites. Cuba was the world's largest sugar producer and the newly independent United States was its biggest market. Meanwhile, the *criollo* bourgeoisie (born in Cuba of Spanish descent) was becoming wealthier and impatient with Spanish rule. By 1825 there were only two Spanish colonies left in the Americas – Cuba and Puerto Rico. The US twice attempted to buy Cuba from Spain, in 1848 and 1854, but the colonial power refused to sell. In the 1850s nationalist pressure for self-rule began to build and soon became unstoppable. ◆

5. Wars of independence

CRIOLLO PLANTERS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE of Oriente began the first war of independence on 10 October 1868 at the instigation of Carlos Manuel de Cespedes who called for the abolition of slavery. More than 200,000 Cubans and 80,000 Spaniards died in the fighting and the exhausted rebel leadership was forced to sign a peace treaty in February 1878. US investors snapped up plantations sold cheaply by bankrupt Spanish landowners. By the late 1890s, 70 per cent of the land in Cuba was in US hands and 90 per cent of the country's sugar went to the US. The second war against Spain was started in 1895 by Cuba's national hero, José Martí, a gifted writer and advocate of social justice. Martí campaigned for Cuban independence from exile in the United States and warned of the danger of American domination. He was killed in the first months of the war but the fighting continued. In February 1898 the US battleship Maine was blown up in Havana harbour. Washington blamed Spain and declared war a few months later.

In July the Spanish surrendered and the Americans occupied Cuba. In 1902 the island finally gained its independence after being forced to accept a made-in-USA constitution which included the Platt Amendment. This clause gave the US the right to intervene in Cuban internal affairs whenever it deemed necessary to protect American interests. It also allowed for a US naval base at Guantánamo Bay which remains to this day. ◆



José Martí ▶

FPG INTERNATIONAL

◀ Fulgencio Batista

6. Dictators and gangsters

THE NEXT FIVE DECADES were dominated by corruption, incompetence and increasing American control of the economy. Sugar and tobacco were exported to the US in exchange for imports at preferential tariffs: by 1956, three-quarters of Cuban imports were from the US. Tourism boomed along with gambling and prostitution as mobsters from Miami and New York moved into Havana. Meanwhile, poverty and unemployment increased and the countryside was virtually ignored. In 1933, a young mulatto army sergeant, Fulgencio Batista, seized power and ran the country until 1944. The next two governments combined systemic corruption with brutal repression of political opponents. Batista staged another coup in March 1952 'to restore order and democracy'. Elections, which the mildly liberal Partido Ortodoxo was expected to win, were called off. Batista and his cronies were intent on lining their pockets and the dictatorship opened its arms to organized crime. Order was maintained by the army and the secret police. Hundreds of government opponents were tortured and murdered. ◆

7. The Revolution triumphs

ON 26 JULY 1953 over 100 militants and students led by a young lawyer, Fidel Castro, attacked the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba. The assault was thwarted and most of the rebels killed. Castro was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Two years later he was granted amnesty under popular pressure and fled to Mexico City where he gathered other revolutionaries around him, including his brother Raúl and a radical Argentine doctor named Ernesto Guevara. In December 1956 Castro and 81 cohorts sailed from Mexico in a small yacht called *Granma*: the Cuban Revolution had begun. The guerrillas established themselves in the Sierra Maestra mountains near Santiago and slowly gained support among the peasants. In the cities an underground resistance grew, staging protests and supplying new recruits and arms to Castro's fighters.

In May 1958 Batista dispatched 10,000 soldiers to wipe out the guerrillas but the campaign failed miserably. Castro's troops fought back led by Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos. As popular support for the guerrillas spread Batista's troops became demoralized. Finally, his army collapsed and the dictator fled to the Dominican Republic on New Year's Day, 1959, with $40million. Che and Camilo arrived in Havana the next day. Fidel, now 33, drove from Santiago to Havana, arriving on 8 January. He was named Prime Minister and on 25 January over a million Cubans filled the streets to hear Fidel define the goals of the new Revolution. ◆

ALBERTO KORDA

8. Guerrillas in power

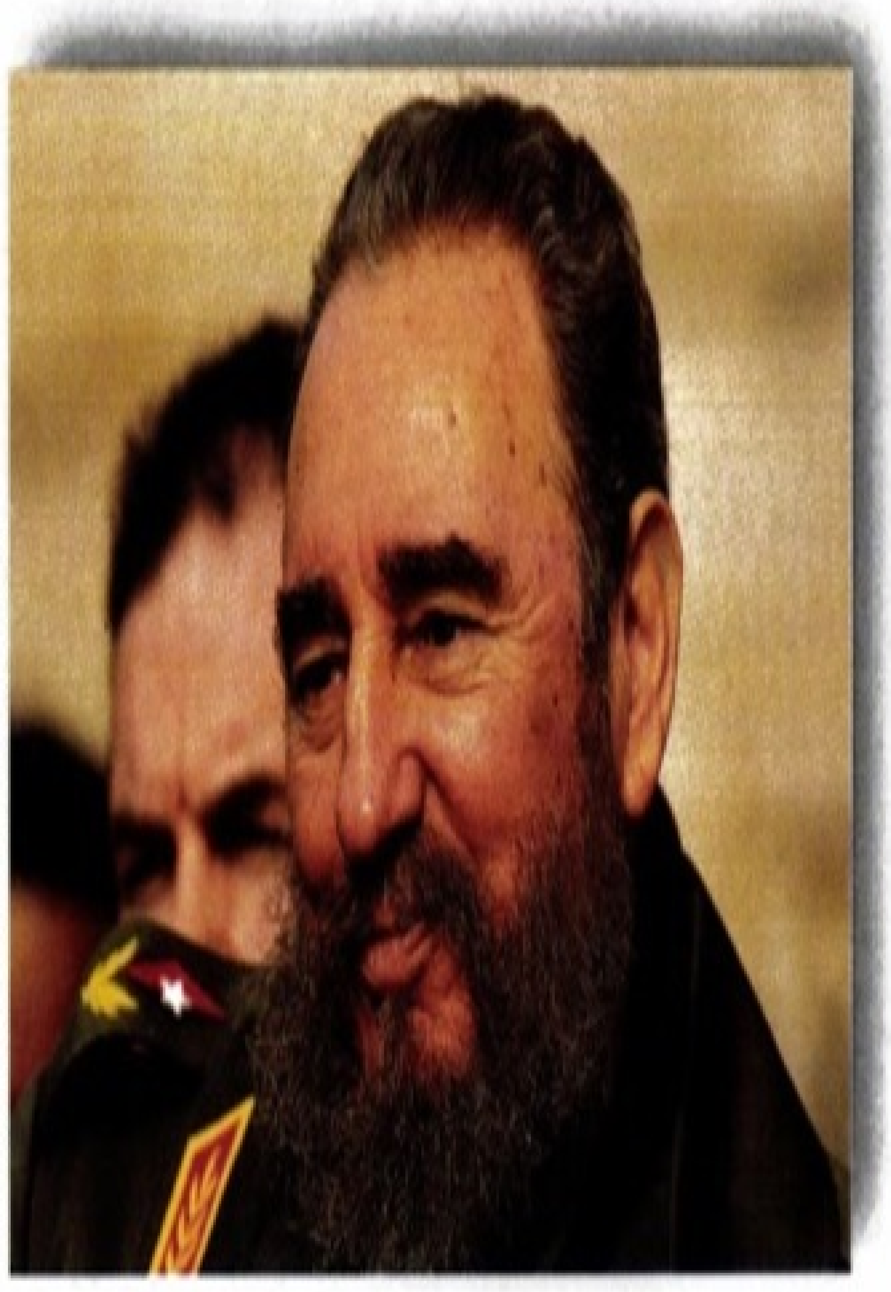
THE NEW GOVERNMENT immediately nationalized all landholdings over 400 hectares. Racial discrimination was abolished, rents slashed and salaries increased. Some land was redistributed to landless peasants and the rest was turned into state farms where agricultural workers were given secure, paid employment for the first time. Thousands of volunteers spread across the countryside to teach peasants to read and write in one of the most successful literacy campaigns of all time. The US was outraged by the nationalization of American-owned plantations and initiated a CIA-led plan to oust the Castro Government.

Cuba responded by nationalizing all US-owned companies and by establishing closer economic and political ties with the Soviet Union. Washington began an economic blockade and cut off diplomatic relations in January, 1961. The US effort to topple the revolutionary government culminated in the 17 April 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion by 1,400 CIA-trained Cuban exiles. The invasion failed miserably. The following October the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. Moscow had installed 40 nuclear missiles on Cuban soil. The US threatened war unless the missiles were removed: in the end the Soviets backed down in exchange for a promise from President Kennedy not to invade. ◆

9. Building Utopia

FIDEL CASTRO AND CHE GUEVARA set out to build a utopian socialist state. This included a complete shake-up of the economy and a ban on all forms of private enterprise. Despite Soviet aid, production sagged and a quarter-million disgruntled Cubans left for the US. An ambitious effort to harvest 10 million tons of sugar in 1970 produced economic chaos and pushed Cuba further into the Soviet orbit.

Dependence on Moscow increased in the 1970s as Cuba adopted the Soviet model of authoritarian central planning and bureaucratization. The system survived on Soviet subsidies which helped build an impressive social-welfare system. But underneath, the economy was sputtering and frustration growing: 125,000 Cubans left for the US in 1980 alone. Dissent and criticism were stifled. Opportunities for economic advancement were limited and corruption was spreading – bringing with it both cynicism and disillusionment. ◆



R MEIGNEUX & F GELY / CAMERA PRESS

10. The special period

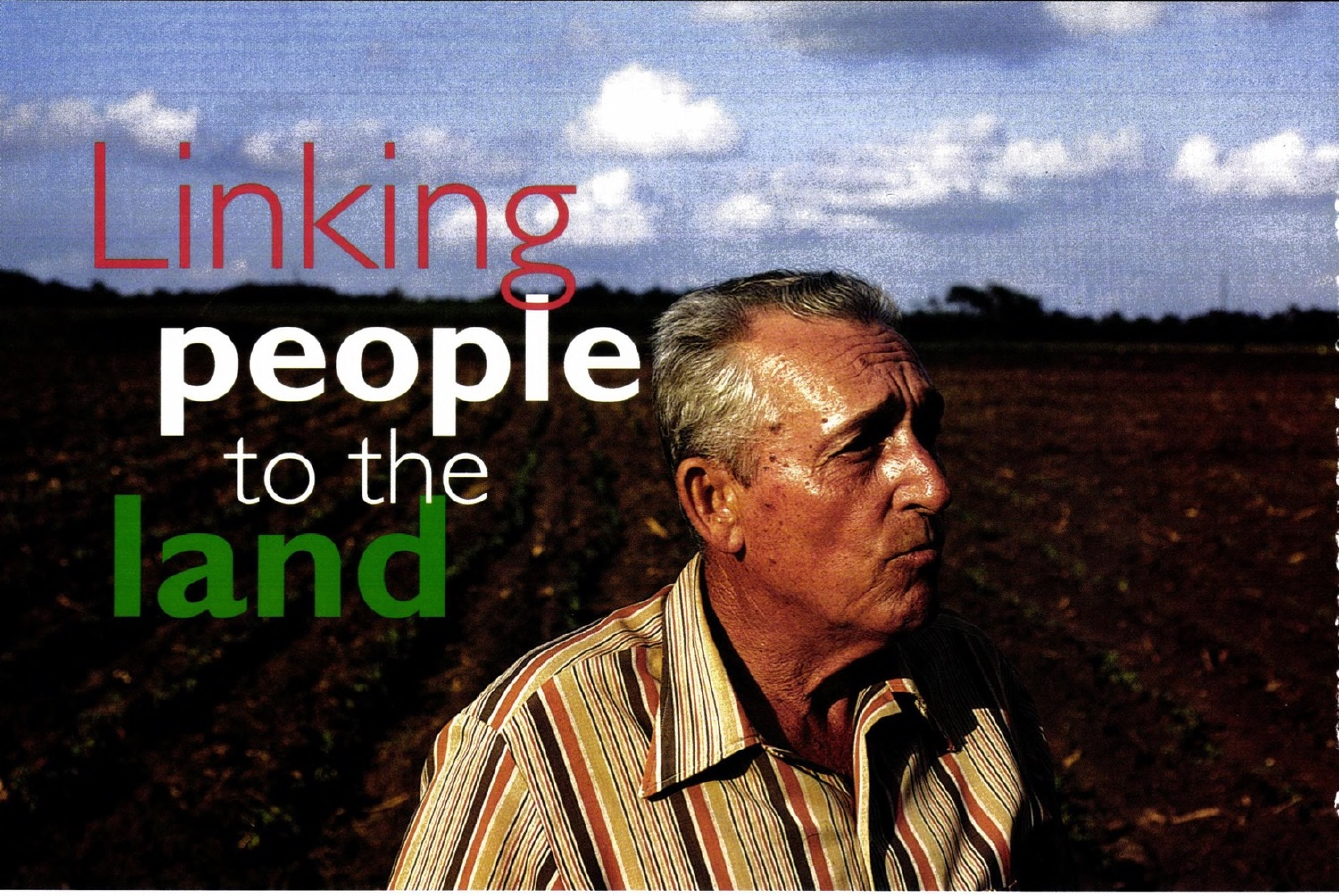
IN THE MID-1980s FIDEL CASTRO tried to loosen the rigid Soviet model. But with US President Ronald Reagan's anti-communist crusade in full swing there was little room to move. With the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in 1989, Cuba lost five billion dollars worth of support almost overnight and in August 1990 President Castro announced a 'special period' austerity program to confront the nation's worst-ever crisis. As Soviet oil imports dropped, Cuban industry and agriculture ground to a halt. The US used this opportunity to tighten its trade embargo. The 1992 Torricelli Act curtailed shipments of food and medical supplies from subsidiaries of American companies. Basic consumer goods like soap and clothing grew scarce. The country's limited resources were channelled into education and healthcare, both deemed crucial to the Government's survival.

The Government introduced a clutch of market reforms including legalization of the dollar and limited self-employment. References to Marxism-Leninism were removed from the Cuban Constitution. In March 1996 Washington turned up the heat by passing the Helms-Burton Bill which set out to limit foreign investment in the country. Canada and the European Union challenged the American law. In January 1998 Pope John II paid an historic visit to Cuba. He censured the US for its trade embargo while urging the Castro regime to cede political space to opposition voices. Shortly afterwords Havana announced the release of several hundred political prisoners. The Revolution now faces its biggest challenge: to create a pluralistic, participatory democracy based on social justice while finding an independent place in the emerging global economy. ◆

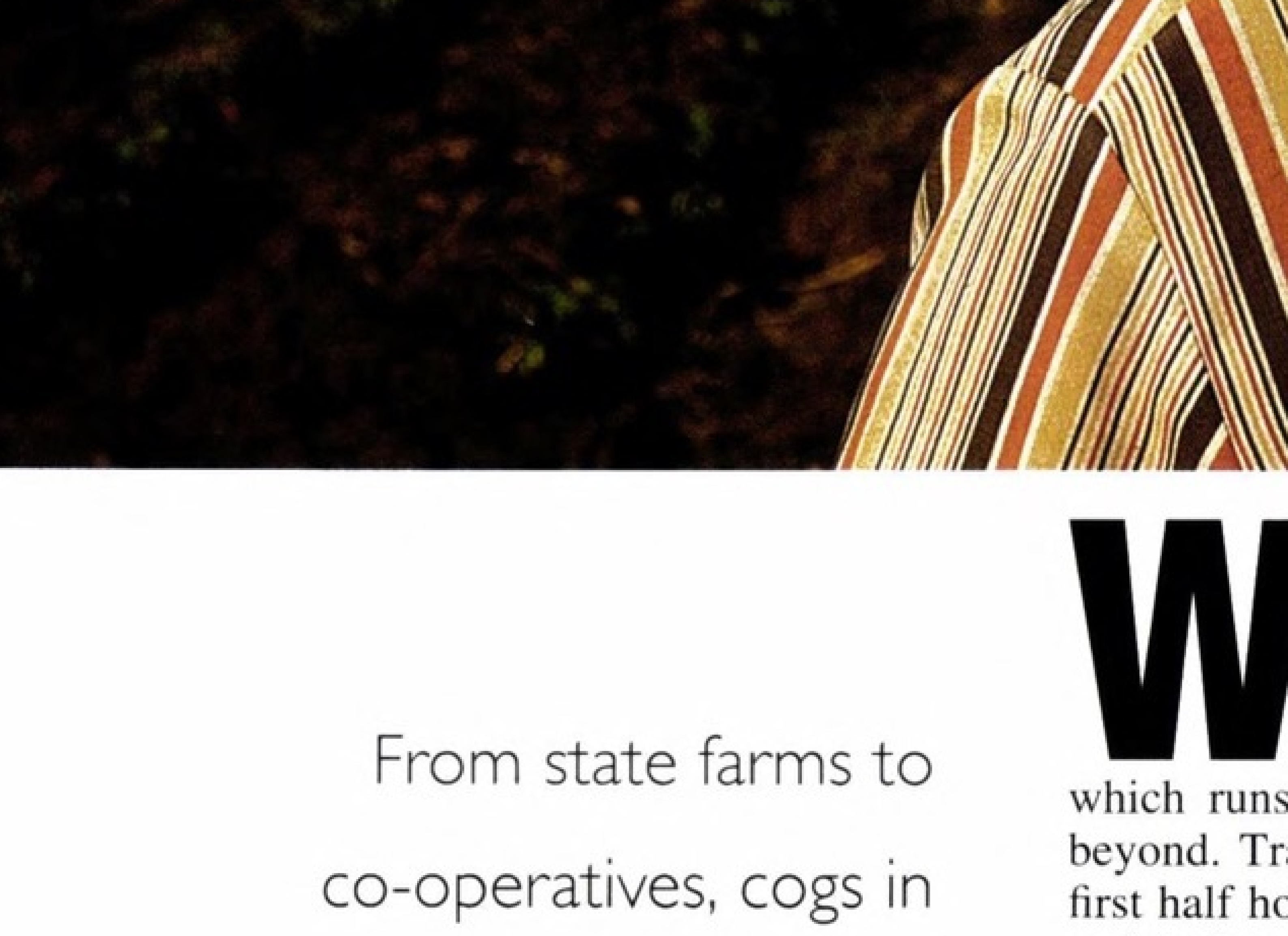
GRR
¡NO LES TENEMOS

TRYGVE BOLSTAD / PANOS PICTURES

Linking people to the land



From state farms to co-operatives, cogs in the wheel to self-management...



WE'VE slipped out of Havana in the half-light of dawn and now we're thundering down the Autopista Nacional, the eight-lane river of concrete which runs south-east to Santa Clara and beyond. Traffic is light, very light. For the first half hour or so there are a few cyclists and twice an ox cart trudges along the verge. For the next 450 kilometres en route to Ciego de Avila we pass maybe a hundred trucks and buses. And once, memorably, the glassy-eyed head of a large cow severed at the neck and poised on a bloody smear at the roadside, a dozen metres in front of the mammoth old truck which must have hit it the previous evening. The carcass, in meat-short Cuba, has already disappeared.

I'm travelling with Minor Sinclair, a transplanted American who, with his wife Martha Thompson, works as the Oxfam Canada Field Director in Cuba. Oxfam is one of the few foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a program in the country.

Cuba has been especially guarded in its relations with overseas donors. There are bilateral (government-to-government) programs and both the European Community and the UN Development Program are here. But foreign NGOs are rare. And the few that do operate are not allowed much of a profile. No squadrons of Land Rovers, no troupes of hired locals. Offices are frowned on. Martha and Minor work from their home.

We are on our way to visit some of the agricultural co-operatives Oxfam is helping support in the rich farmland around Ciego de Avila, a small city located about a third of the way down the island.

After the Revolution the Government launched a major land-reform effort, nationalizing all foreign-owned land and turning the big sugar plantations and cattle ranches into state farms. (Until recently, 80 per cent of Cuba's farmland was in the form of large state farms.) The first agrarian reform law gave 26 hectares of land free to any farmer who wanted it and cemented the new government's popularity in the countryside. More than 100,000 received deeds to their land. In 1963 private holdings were capped at 67 hectares – about a fifth of the land stayed in the hands of small-holders. Half of those remained as independent farmers while the other half were organized into co-operatives.

Some of these are formal co-operatives where farmers manage and work the land collectively (known as *Co-operativas de Producción Agropecuaria* or CPAs); others are credit and service co-ops where farmers operate independently but band together to buy inputs and share machinery (these are known as *Co-operativas de Credito y Servicios* or CCSs).

Unlike the Soviet Union, peasants in Cuba were not forced into collective agri-

PHOTOS: WAYNE ELLWOOD

Leonardo Benitez Martinez (left) and his neighbours Pedro and Maria Gomez (below left): Small farmers are Cuba's most efficient food producers.

culture. Co-operativization was encouraged and supported by the State – for example CPA members can get cheap credit for building materials to construct their own houses. But it was largely voluntary. And that's the reason independent peasants and co-ops are the most efficient and productive farmers in Cuba today. Though they farm only 20 per cent of the total land it's estimated that they produce 40 per cent of all food grown in the country.

Minor and I pay our first visit to the home of Leonardo Benitez Martinez. He's President of the CCS in Mamonal, a rural community of 5,000 not far from Ciego de Avila. Oxfam has been helping to fund training sessions in organic farming. And they've also helped the CCS in Mamonal buy some new tires for their tractors.

As we approach Leonardo's house family members scramble with embarrassment. There was a sudden rain shower before our arrival and several bags of rice which had been drying on the terrace were moved into the sitting room. Now the clouds have passed and chairs are hastily dragged outside.

Leonardo had a heart attack in 1987 and spent three months in hospital in Havana though you would never know it today. 'I was there in the best hospital in the capital with the best doctors and all for free,' Leonardo recalls. 'That is one of the great things about our Revolution.' A broad smile flickers across his face as he relaxes into his chair. Then he tells me about his farm. He grows mostly tomatoes on his 6.5 hectares but he also plants rice, corn and beans and various root crops for his own consumption. Like other farmers in the area his production declined steeply in the early 1990s when supplies dried up overnight.

'In 1989, I was growing over 1,500 quintales (100 lb sacks) of tomatoes; in 1993 all we managed was 970 quintales. That was mainly due to a virus carried by white fly.' Without pesticides, Leonardo's harvest and his neighbours' were devastated.

Leonardo leads me to his land, where workers up to their ankles in mud are planting tomato seedlings. 'Mostly my family and I work the fields,' he explains. 'But we need to pay people to help at harvest or planting time. And sometimes we have work exchanges with other families.' I remark on the oxen grazing at the far corner of his land and he tells me that during the 'special period' oxen have re-appeared across the island to take the place of tractors that sit idle due to lack of tires, spare parts and gasoline.

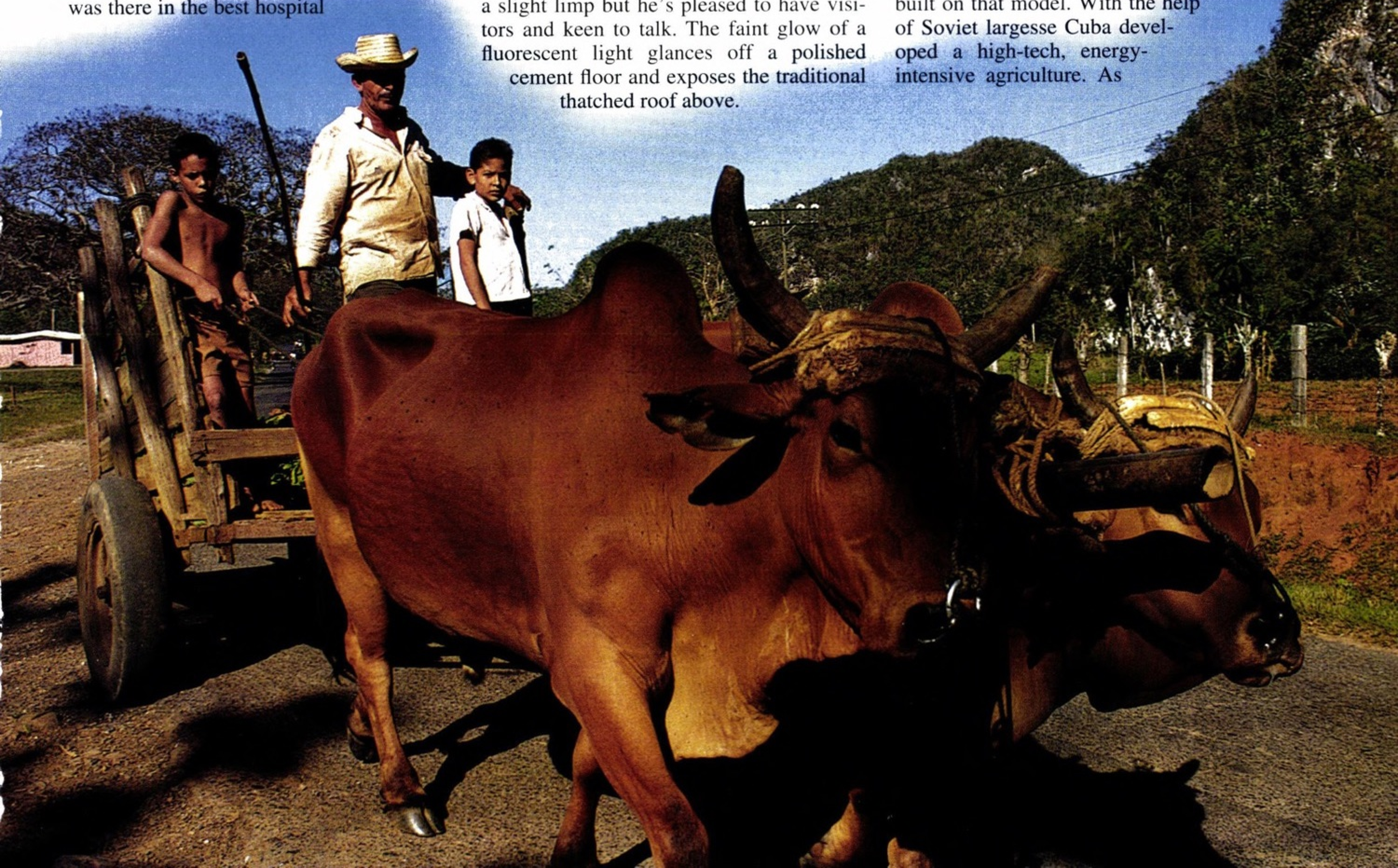
Pedro Gomez is also a CCS member and a neighbour of Leonardo's. It's now inky dark outside and we're sitting in Pedro's parlour. He is 61 years old and has a slight limp but he's pleased to have visitors and keen to talk. The faint glow of a fluorescent light glances off a polished cement floor and exposes the traditional thatched roof above.

Pedro explains that he plants 27 hectares in tobacco, tomatoes, beans, yucca and rice. All co-op members have a contractual relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture and must sell a set portion of their crop to the State for a pre-determined price. His 'plan' (as the Government contract is called) is set in advance but there is not a lot of room for negotiation. 'We get credit and inputs according to our assigned quote and the amount of land we plant,' Pedro says. 'We get paid 8 pesos per quintale within the quota and 12 pesos per quintale over the quota. But we can also sell our surplus on the open market if we choose.'

Oxen have re-appeared to take the place of tractors, idle due to lack of spare parts

Part of the Government's restructuring means slowly removing subsidies but it has to be done with care or farmers like Pedro will feel the pinch. Last year, he says, fertilizer was three pesos a bag. This year it's nine pesos – less than a tenth of its real cost but a big jump for farmers being paid largely in pesos.

Unlike most of Latin America, Cuba never really had a strong campesino tradition. The foreign-dominated plantation culture meant that most peasants were seasonal farmworkers rather than small-holders. After the Revolution the giant state-farm sector built on that model. With the help of Soviet largesse Cuba developed a high-tech, energy-intensive agriculture. As



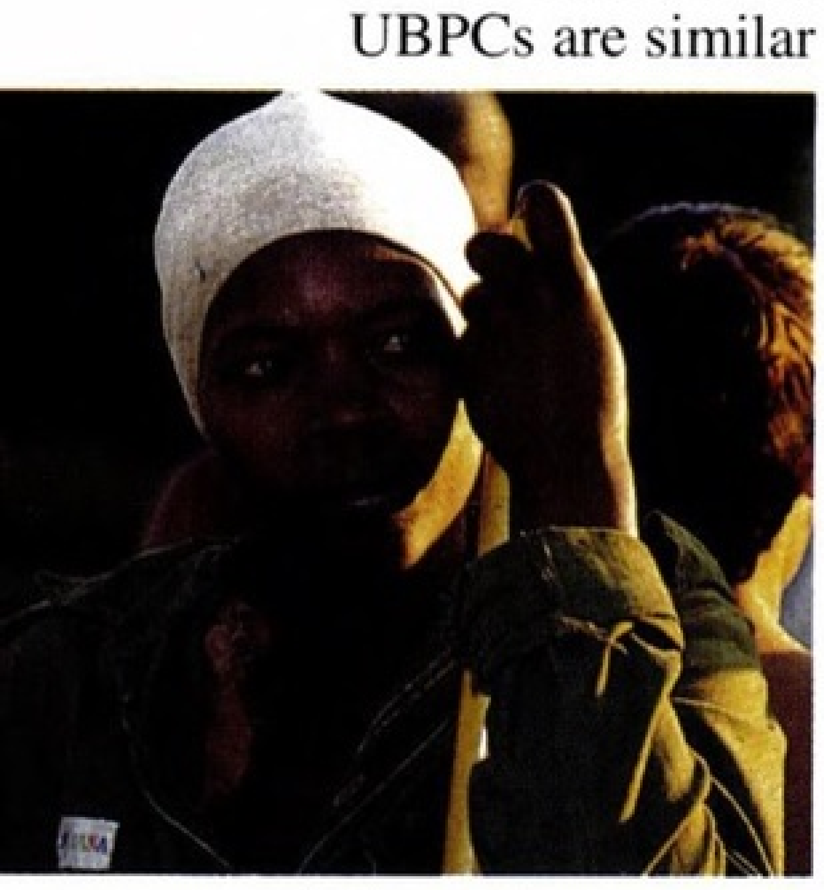
JULIO ETCHART

long as the USSR continued to pump in money the state farms were moderately productive. But when the props were removed they were revealed for what they were – mammoth, inefficient sinkholes. Cuban planners had known this for years, but with such huge subsidies there was little incentive to do anything about it.

The problem was both economic and structural. Employees on the state farms are just that: workers, not farmers, and historically their wages have been among the lowest in the country. State-run industrial agriculture was highly centralized and rigidly hierarchical. Workers were divorced from the product of their labour and had no control over it. They had little material or spiritual incentive to be productive and they weren't.

In the early 1990s the Government introduced a program called 'Linking People to the Land' to shake up the lethargic state farms by establishing small work teams that could take responsibility for all aspects of farming a particular piece of land. Pay was directly linked to productivity.

Then in September 1993 the Government took the next step. State farms were dissolved altogether and workers encouraged to come together into *Unidades Basicas de Producción Co-operativa* (UBPCs). The formation of UBPCs is the biggest change in Cuban agriculture since the Revolution. Land is leased rent-free to former state-farm employees in a usufruct arrangement (it reverts back to the state if not used) and members inherit all state-owned tools, machinery and buildings. The UBPCs are similar to the older CPAs except they tend to be vastly larger. They are self-managed and financially independent – though what they grow is dictated by the Ministry of Agriculture.



PHOTOS: WAYNE ELLWOOD

Most state-owned land has now been turned into UBPCs: there are around 5,000 with more on the way. State farms now control only a quarter of all agricultural land – down from 80 per cent five years ago. There is no doubt this worker-managed co-operative model has boosted food production. However, the transition is by no means complete and there are problems – the main one is the centralized management legacy of the state farms themselves.

Nonetheless, the new self-management model seems to be paying off. Cutting state farms loose from the public purse has helped reduce the deficit from 33 per cent of the GDP to two per cent since 1993. Soon, instead of providing subsidies, the Government hopes it will be collecting taxes. ■

City farmer Jorge Antunis harvests yucca from his Havana garden.

Green guerrillas

In the face of desperate urban food shortages Cubans have been encouraged to grow their own – organically.

'THERE, those roots at the end, that's the part we eat.' Jorge Antunis has been yanking yucca plants out of the ground to show me the results of his labours. We're standing in the middle of his 'farm', a patch of formerly idle land only minutes away from the Plaza of the Revolution in central Havana. Jorge scrapes some of the dirt off the root and then hacks the bulbous tubers from the main stem of the spindly plant with a whack of his machete.

'Six years ago,' he tells me proudly, 'there was nothing planted here.' We're standing under a canopy of banana leaves trying to escape the noon-day sun. Across the street are three large apartment buildings where Jorge and the six other families that work this inner-city garden live. The plot, maybe a thousand square metres, is intensely cultivated. In addition to the yucca and banana, there are tomatoes, sugar cane, plantain, beans, *malanga* (a potato-like root crop), citrus trees, lettuce and even a small beehive at the far corner of the plantain patch.

'The land was rocky and worn-out at first,' Jorge explains. 'One of the first things we had to do was rebuild the soil with new organic material and manure.'

To do that Jorge and his neighbours got help from Havana's Urban Agriculture Department, part of a program which began in January 1991 to encourage city-dwellers to grow their own food. In addition to these *huertos populares* (popular gardens), the Government has cleared the way for an impressive system of larger organic gardens called *organoponicos*. Sometimes these are run by the State (the Cuban military has dozens of them), sometimes they're connected to a particular workplace and used to funnel vegetables directly to the employees. And at times they operate as self-financing small businesses. Organoponicos tend to be larger than the private gardens and are run with meticulous care.

My guide this morning, Manuel Gonsalvez, is an extension worker from the Urban Agriculture Department. He is an energetic 38-year-old with a toothbrush moustache and a backward baseball cap. One of his main tasks is to show people how to garden without chemicals.

Jorge complains to him that his peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers are being devoured by pests. Manuel listens, then explains what can be done. 'By planting a mixture of plants (some Spanish oregano here, some marigolds there) around the food crops you use nature to your advantage. You end up with a biological struggle, a system of good bugs and bad bugs which create an equilibrium.'

Jorge nods, not totally convinced. For most people working in the city gardens, organic produce is a completely new concept. But since chemical pesticides and fertilizers are expensive and in short supply, they're willing to learn. ■

Yankees in the midst

An imperial outpost on Cuban soil...

I'M AWAKENED by the cannonading clip-clop, clip-clop of horses' hooves on pavement and for a few groggy moments I dream I'm in some dusty, nineteenth century, mid-western American town. In fact I'm in Guantánamo, a small city of 200,000 just 80 kilometres east of Santiago de Cuba.

In the wake of the nationwide petroleum shortage the people here depend mostly on horses and bicycles for transport.

It's an amazing sight to see a town virtually free of motor vehicles. In place of buses there are an estimated 300 horse-drawn coaches and they ply all the main city streets – a quiet, efficient and surprisingly quick form of public transport. The *cocheros* (drivers) shout their end destination as they pass each stop. You hop on if there's room, hand the cochero a peso and settle in. At night, gliding through the darkened streets with a warm breeze blowing softly, the sharp tattoo of horses' hooves echoes everywhere.

Outside the country, Guantánamo is known less for its horse-powered public transport than for the giant US naval base of the same name located only 26 kilometres away. A US naval base on Cuban soil? It is hard to conceive given the animosity between the two nations. Yet there it is: the unfortunate result of imperial history – 170 square kilometres where the stars and stripes brazenly flies, guarding both sides of the entrance to the Bahia de Guantánamo, Cuba's largest and deepest natural harbour.

The Americans managed to get their hands on it nearly a century ago. The Cubans had been fighting the Spanish for independence for a decade and were on the verge of victory when the Americans joined the fray in 1898. The Spanish quickly surrendered and US troops occupied the island until 1902. Cuba finally gained its independence that year but the price was steep. The island was forced to accept the Platt Amendment, a piece of legislation which allowed the US to intervene in Cuba at any time 'for the preservation of Cuban independence'. To make intervention easier the amendment also granted the US the Guantánamo Base 'in perpetuity'. In 1934, after much pressure, Washington agreed to change the grant to a 99-year lease.

Today the American base is an island within an island. Barbed-wire security fences and watchtowers mark the perimeter on both sides. And the half-kilometre strip of land between Cuban and American territory is heavily mined. The base itself has been completely cut off by the Cubans. There is a desalinization plant for fresh water and the base must generate its own power and process its own sewage. There are around 8,000 Americans there – 2,400 troops and the rest family and support staff.

I can see virtually the entire installation shimmering under the mid-day sun from the *Mirador de Malones*, a viewing station on a steep cliff overlooking the base. Two kilometres away I can make out clearly the magnificent bay flanked by two US airstrips and the azure Caribbean beyond.

I have driven to the Mirador with José 'Pepin' Perez, a garrulous 72-year-old resident of Guantánamo city who knew the base well. We shared the back seat of a jet-black, Soviet-built Lada, travelling in comfort due to the hospitality of the local Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos (Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, also known as ICAP).

As we made our way past a series of military checkpoints the land changed to cactus-strewn scrub and the road began to climb steeply. Pepin grew more excited. This was his first view of the base since he'd been fired in 1961.

He had begun working at the base when he was 18 years old. 'I remember the date just like it was yesterday. In the middle of World War Two the base was booming. There were 12,000 Cubans here in 1944 doing all kinds of work.'

I ask him how he feels looking at this outpost of American imperialism, where he spent a good deal of his youth.

He draws a slow breath then says quietly: 'When I see this I feel angry that the Americans still occupy a piece of my country.'

Cubans find the presence of the American troops deeply insulting and you would be hard pressed to find anyone who is not outraged by the US refusal to return the base. Since Pepin comes to me via ICAP I take for granted that he is a Communist Party loyalist. But he is also careful to point out that his personal experience was not all negative.

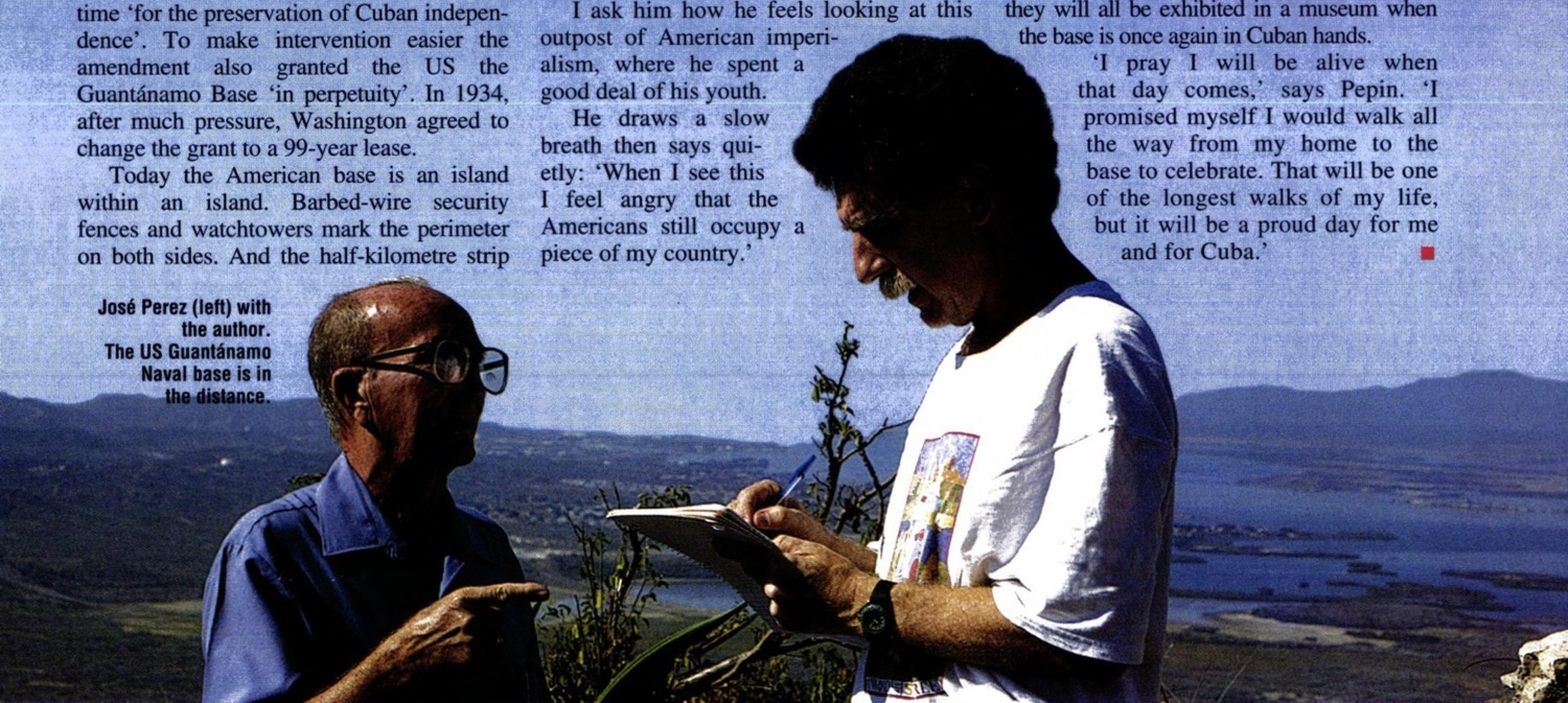
'When I worked down there,' he says, 'I got along with everyone. I was treated well. I played with their children. But when the time came to choose between my country and that job, I chose my country.'

Pepin was fired shortly after the US-supported Bay of Pigs fiasco when Cuban exiles botched an attempt to overthrow the revolutionary government and tensions between Havana and Washington were running high.

'I didn't know much about politics then,' he recalls. 'But I was beginning to learn. I was attending Revolutionary Instruction School at night; we were reading about socialism and of course about Marx, Engels and Lenin. They called me a communist and I was dismissed. But they were fair. Three months later they sent me a $2,500 cheque for my pension money.'

The Castro administration has made it clear that the return of the base is essential before normal relations between the two countries can be resumed. Washington, enjoying Cuba's pique, refuses even to discuss the matter. Meanwhile, the $2,400 rent cheques which the US sends yearly, pile up in Havana – uncashed. Fidel's brother, Raúl, has sworn that they will all be exhibited in a museum when the base is once again in Cuban hands.

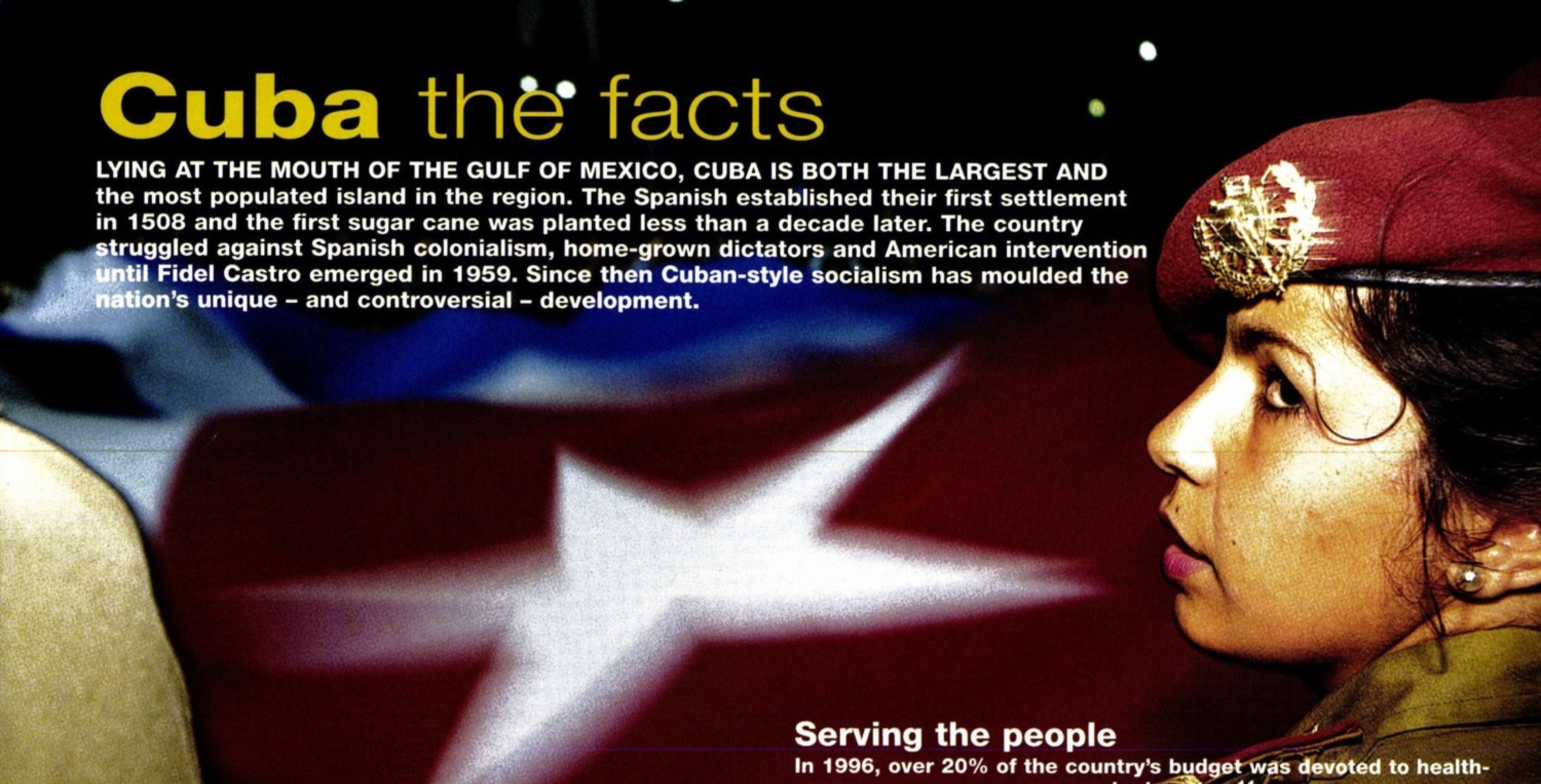
'I pray I will be alive when that day comes,' says Pepin. 'I promised myself I would walk all the way from my home to the base to celebrate. That will be one of the longest walks of my life, but it will be a proud day for me and for Cuba.' ■



José Perez (left) with the author. The US Guantánamo Naval base is in the distance.

Cuba the facts

LYING AT THE MOUTH OF THE GULF OF MEXICO, CUBA IS BOTH THE LARGEST AND the most populated island in the region. The Spanish established their first settlement in 1508 and the first sugar cane was planted less than a decade later. The country struggled against Spanish colonialism, home-grown dictators and American intervention until Fidel Castro emerged in 1959. Since then Cuban-style socialism has moulded the nation's unique – and controversial – development.



JULIO ETCHART

WAYNE ELLWOOD

Rainbow nation

Cuba's 11 milion people are the most racially varied in the Caribbean.

◆ Officially the population is 66% white, 21.9% *mulatto* (mixed), 12% black and 0.1% Asian. However, the figures are widely disbelieved. In the eastern province of Oriente and in Matanzas province near Havana, blacks are more than half the population.

◆ Racial equality is enshrined in the Cuban constitution and discrimination was outlawed in 1966. But blacks still predominate in low-end service jobs, sports and music. Of the 24 members of the Cuban Communist Party's powerful Politburo there is one black man.

◆ Thousands of slaves from Senegal, Congo, Gambia and Guinea were brought to work the sugar plantations. From 1821 to 1831 nearly 600,000 Africans were imported. After slavery was abolished another quarter million blacks came from Jamaica and Haiti earlier this century.[1]

◆ Eastern European Jews fleeing oppression flocked to the island in the 1920s, mostly to Havana. By 1940 there were 24,000 Jews in the country. Ninety per cent fled after the 1959 Revolution. Today around 1,000 remain.[2]

◆ More than 150,000 Chinese were brought as indentured servants in the nineteenth century to build railroads and work the sugar fields. Most fled after 1959; those who remain are slowly being absorbed into the ethnic polyglot.[1]

WAYNE ELLWOOD

Serving the people

In 1996, over 20% of the country's budget was devoted to health-care and education.[11]

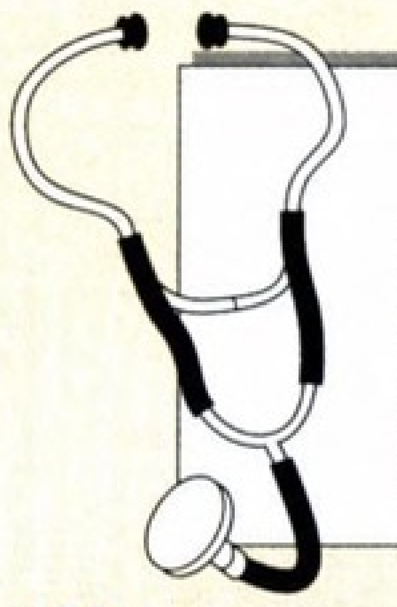
DAVID GARTEN

◆ All schools were nationalized after the Revolution and education became free right through university. The Cuban school system is the envy of the Third World and comparable to many Western countries.

◆ In 1961, a nationwide literacy campaign sent 250,000 young people to the countryside to teach peasants to read and write. Today the adult literacy rate is 95% – the same as Australia or Sweden.[11]

◆ The Cuban public health system is superb though now in crisis as a result of the US economic embargo. All services, including family planning, are free and widely available.

◆ Hundreds of hospitals and rural clinics have been built since the Revolution and basic health indicators are among the world's highest.



Selected health indicators – 1994[12]

	Cuba	Latin America
Life expectancy	75.4	68
Infant mortality	7.9/1,000 births	38/1,000
Under five mortality	12/1,000 births	47/1,000
Maternal mortality	21/1,000 births	178/1,000
Access to health services	98% population	73% pop

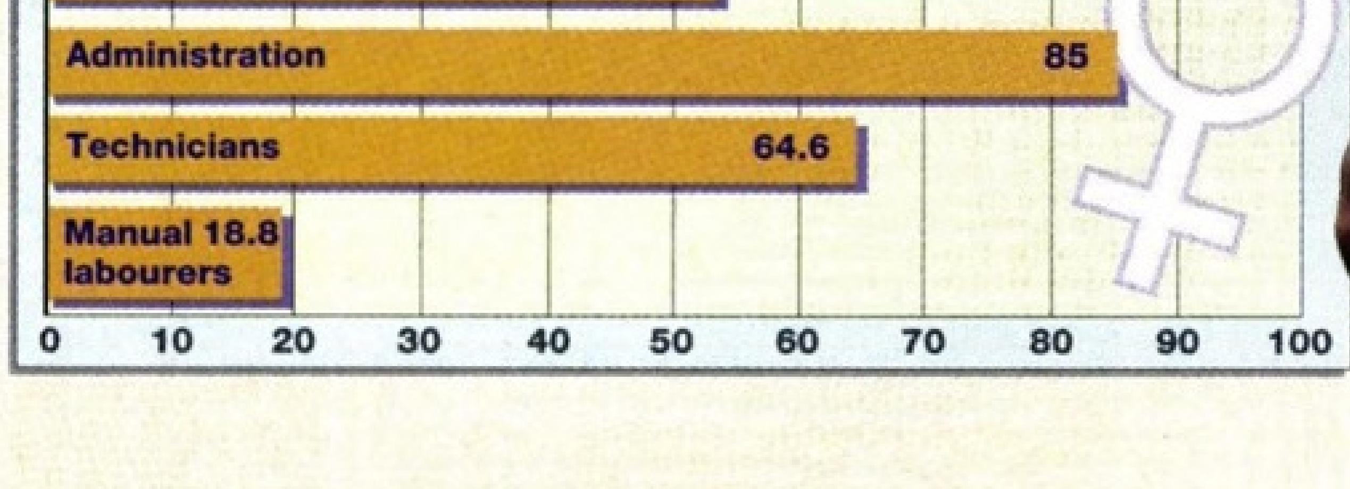
Women on top

Cuban women have made enormous strides since 1959 even though *macho* traditions continue. The Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) is one of the country's largest, best organized 'mass organizations' and claims to represent 84% of all women.

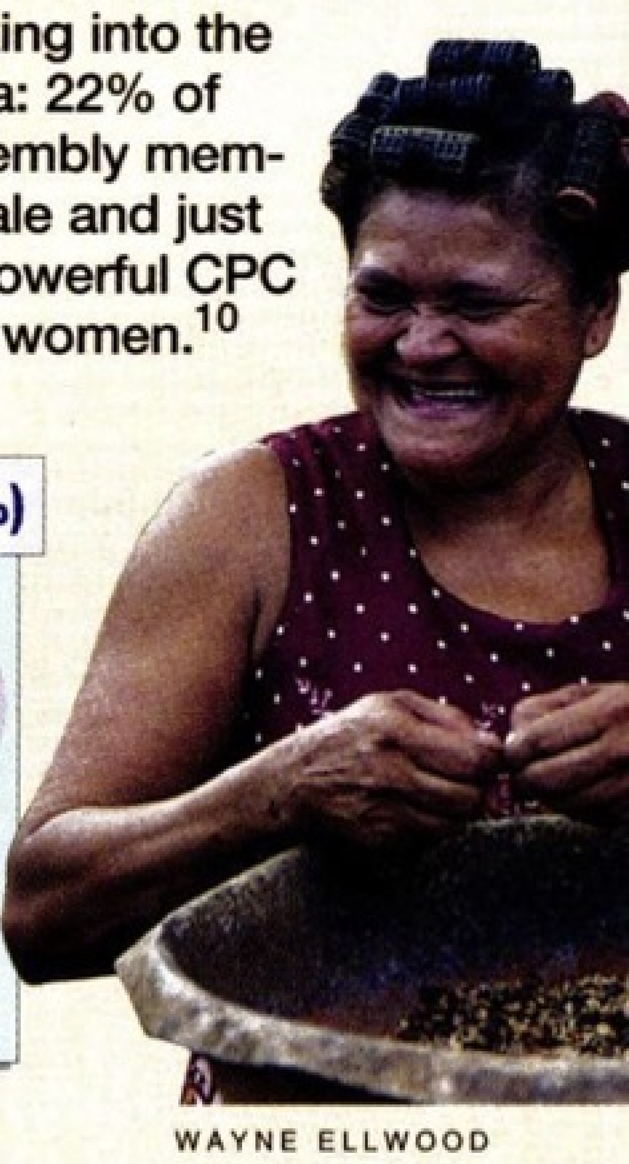
◆ The Family Code passed in 1975 gave Cuban men and women equal rights and responsibilities for child rearing, education and housework.

◆ Women now make up 43% of the workforce compared to 20% before the Revolution. More than 60% of scientific/technical workers are women and they are also the majority in healthcare and education.

◆ Women have been less successful breaking into the political arena: 22% of National Assembly members are female and just 12% of the powerful CPC Politburo are women.[10]



Female workers by sector – 1995 (%)



WAYNE ELLWOOD

Salsa and *beisbol*

Cuba has a rich and vibrant cultural life, despite the fact that many of the country's writers, artists and performers now live in exile.

◆ Afro-Cuban music has been especially influential. The roots of modern *salsa* lie in Cuban *son,* a heavily percussive musical style with bass, bongos, trumpets and guitar. Cuba also spawned the *conga,* the *mambo,* the *rumba* and a unique style of Cuban jazz.

◆ Cubans are sports mad. Ironically, baseball (imported from the US in the 1860s) is a passion. The national team won the 1992 Olympic gold medal. And Cubans were glued to their radios last year when the young Cuban pitcher and recent exile, Livan Hernandez, powered the *Florida Marlins* to a World Series victory.

◆ Fidel Castro pitched for the University of Havana team and was offered a contract with the *New York Giants* in 1949 that included a $5,000 signing bonus. The sport's terminology has been hispanicized: a home run is a *jonron* and a double play a *doble plei.*[3]

JULIO ETCHART

Religious resurgence

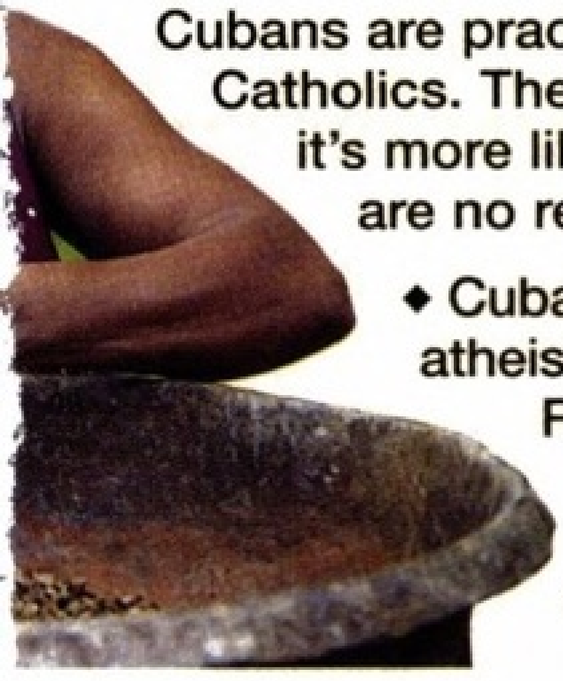
Cuba is a secular state though a recent poll found 74% of Cubans believe in a 'higher power'. Faiths based on beliefs brought by African slaves are most widespread. Catholicism is the main Christian faith but Protestant churches, especially the Baptists and the Presbyterians, are also important.[4]

DAVID GARTEN

◆ The Catholic Church was seen as a vestige of Spanish colonialism and an ally of the wealthy, white élite. The hierarchy opposed the Castro Government's takeover of Church schools: 131 priests were expelled in 1961 as counter-revolutionaries and hundreds more went into exile.[5]

◆ The Government says 1-2% of Cubans are practising Catholics. The Church says it's more like 50%. There are no reliable figures.

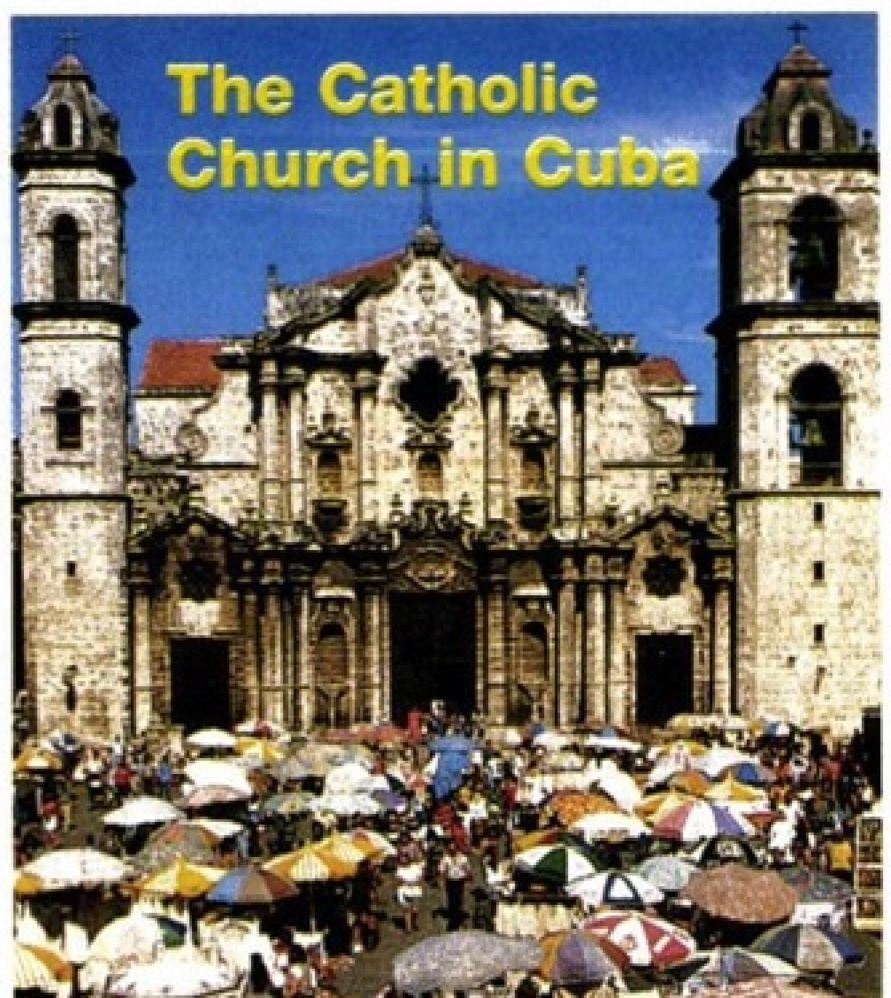
◆ Cuba became an atheist state after the Revolution and religious believers were discriminated against. In 1991 Communist Party membership was opened to religious believers. The following year the notion of an atheist state was shelved. Since then all religions have been on an upswing.



◆ Afro-Cuban religions are widespread and practised by all races. The best known is *santeria* or *regla de ocha* which has a pantheon of over 400 gods or *orishas,* many of which are identified with specific Catholic saints. It is common to find Catholics who have household shrines to the orishas and santeria followers who include Catholic saints in their worship.[6]

◆ Santeria priests known as *babalawos* are gateways to the gods and are consulted regularly. They interpret the commands of specific orishas and pass on sacred teachings to believers who undergo secret initiation rites to become true *santeros*.

The Catholic Church in Cuba



CHRISTINE OSBORNE / CAMERA PRESS

	1959	1997
Churches	700	625
Priests	700	258
Nuns	2,500	500

BOB HENRY / MAGNUM

Sweet hereafter

Sugar is the island's main crop, employing nearly 400,000 people and covering nearly half the arable land. In 1989, three times as much land was devoted to sugar as to food crops.

◆ US investors moved into the Cuban sugar business in the early part of this century and by 1959 half the sugar factories were American owned. In the 1950s sugar accounted for 80% of the country's export earnings – 60% of those exports went to the US which paid above world prices. Sugar exports now account for around 40% of export earnings.[3]

◆ After the Revolution, a new deal was struck with the USSR. The Soviets paid five times more than the world price and arranged a sugar-for-oil swap which cemented Cuba's dependence on sugar exports.

◆ Due to cheap energy from plentiful Soviet oil, sugar production jumped from an average 5.6 million tons in the 1950s to 7.5 million tons in the 1980s. After the Soviet oil deal fell apart production fell by 42%.[7]

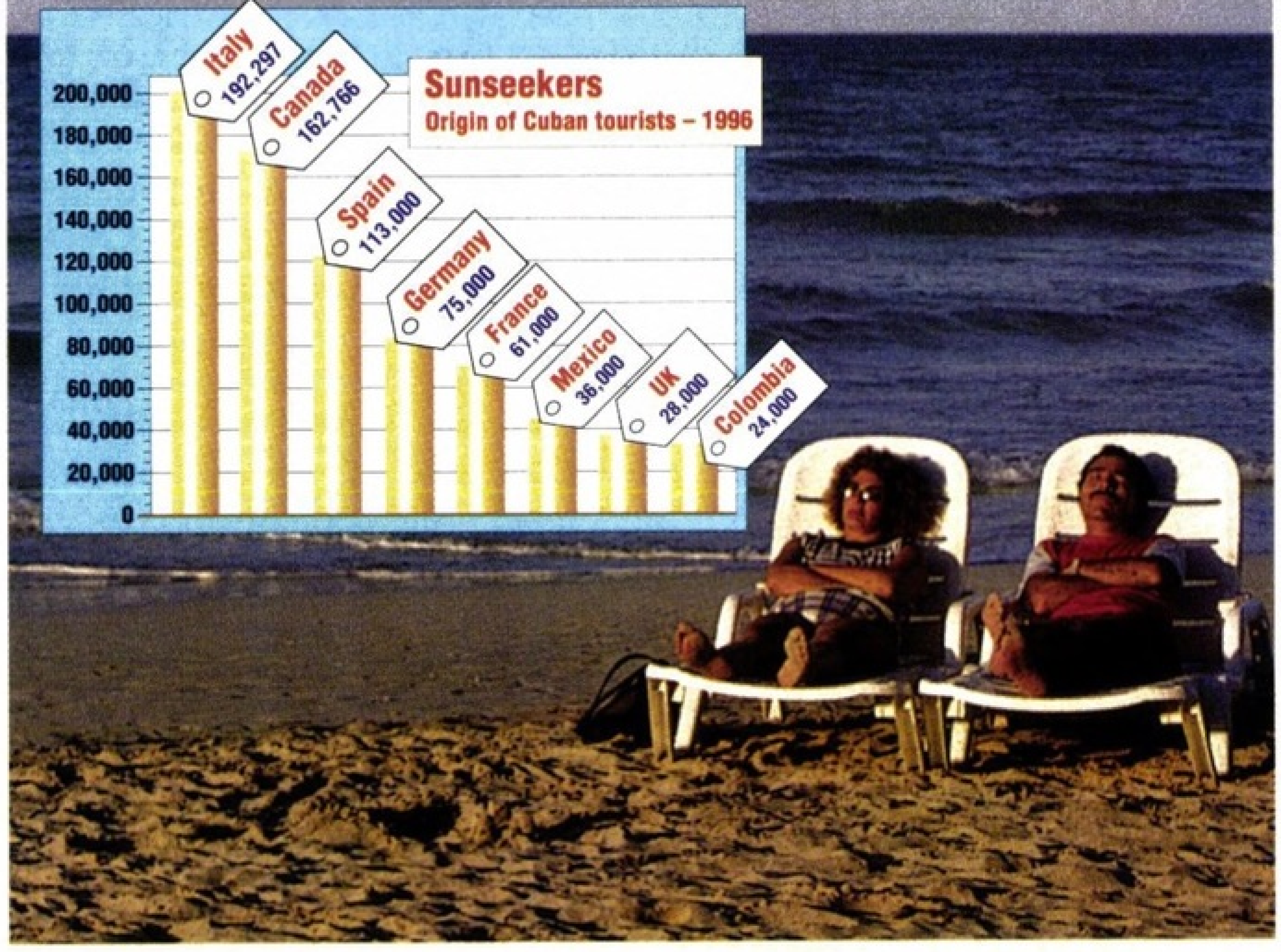
◆ The Government is currently 'rationalizing' the industry, threatening to shut down inefficient mills and stabilize production at four to five million tonnes.

After the fall

In a desperate attempt to garner hard currency to pay for imports of food, medicine, clothing and spare parts the Government is courting foreign investors. Tourism and nickel have replaced sugar as the major dollar earners.

◆ Cuba has an estimated 35% of global nickel deposits. Nickel and cobalt production doubled from 1994 to 1996 to 55,000 tonnes and nickel is the country's second biggest foreign-exchange earner. The industry is controlled by the Canadian company Sherritt International which has more than $200 million invested in the country.[8]

◆ Tourism is Cuba's main source of hard currency. The Government predicts seven million visitors a year by 2010. The industry brought in $1.35 billion in 1996 of which 30% was net profit.[9]

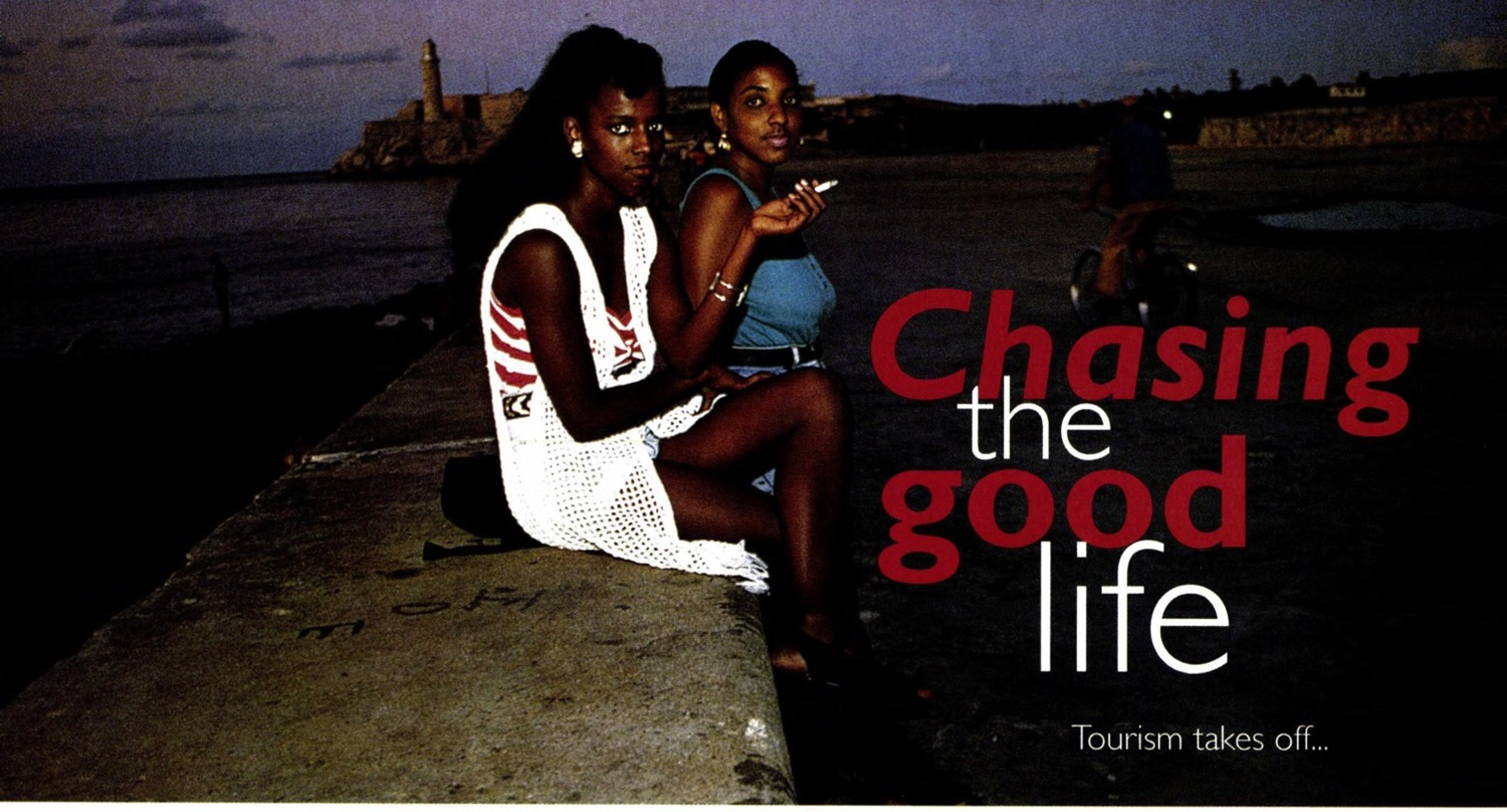


Sunseekers

Origin of Cuban tourists – 1996

RICK GERHARTER / IMPACT VISUALS

Sources: 1 *Cuba: The Land, the History, the people, the culture*, by Stephen Williams, Friedman Publishing, New York, NY, 1994. 2 Personal interview, Casa de la Comunidad Hebrea de Cuba, Havana, Nov 1997. 3 *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution*, Thomas G Patterson, Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford, 1994. 4 *CubaINFO*, Vol 9, No 8, Johns Hopkins University Cuba Exchange Program, Washington, 1997. 5 Archdiocese of Havana, 1997. 6 Personal interview, Casa del Caribe, Santiago de Cuba, Nov 1997. 7 *Cuba Business*, Vol 11:5, Summer 1997. 8 *CubaINFO*, Vol 9, No 12, Sept 11/97. 9 Ministry of Tourism, Havana, 1997. 10 Personal interview, Federation of Cuban Women, Havana, 1997. 11 *Human Development Report 1996*, UNDP, Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford, 1996 and *State of the World's Children Report 1996*, UNICEF, New York, 1996. 12 *The Impact of the US Embargo on Health & Nutrition in Cuba*, American Association for World Health, March 1997.



Chasing the good life

Tourism takes off...

THEY ARE strung out like pearls along the Malecón, dazzling in crotch-high miniskirts and form-fitting spandex. When night falls in Havana hundreds of young girls, black, white and *mestizo* take up positions along the waterfront. They pose singly or in pairs, a respectful 40 or 50 metres apart, hands on hips, legs bare and breasts partly exposed as bait for passing motorists. On any given night there are hundreds of *jinoteras,* as they are known locally, looking for customers. Many are teenagers, no more than 13 or 14, fresh from the countryside; others are teachers or factory workers drawn by the lure of making more in a single night than they can earn working in a month.

The Government hopes for two million visitors a year by the end of the century

Mass tourism and the legalization of the dollar have given a new life to prostitution. Before 1959, the sex industry was a major money-spinner and brothels peppered Havana and other cities. When Fidel Castro came to power he saw prostitution as an affront to Cuban women. One of the first things he did was to shut down the whorehouses, jail the pimps and provide training and jobs for the women. Within two years prostitution was wiped out. It was one of the Revolution's proudest achievements. Now with the hard times of the 1990s prostitution is on an upswing. But while many Cubans are embarrassed and upset by the change, others are in deep denial.

Officially, organizations like the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) deny the link between mass tourism and increasing prostitution. FMC spokesperson Celia Berges Diaz explains patiently and at great length that 'tourism is not to blame'. Instead she lays the blame on the 'poor values' of the women themselves.

'All social problems tend to increase in times of economic crisis and prostitution is no exception,' she explains. 'We find these women have poor moral and social development and that they prefer material things to normal values of love and family.' And she adds: 'Economic needs affect all Cuban women but the majority have chosen to work harder; only a minority has chosen the quick way to get goods.'

She's right in that *jinoterismo* is more than a question of material needs or absolute poverty. As one student moonlighting as a part-time prostitute in old Havana said: 'I want to experience something more in life, to go to the clubs, wear fine clothes and go dancing.' And who can blame her when thousands of foreign tourists flood the country bringing with them a lifestyle which will never be within reach of the average Cuban?

The country has decided to go full throttle on tourist development. Italian, Spanish and Canadian tourists are flocking to the island and investment in the industry is booming. There were joint ventures worth $600 million on the go in 1997 and dozens of new resorts are in the works. Already Varadero, the beach strip east of Havana, looks like Cancun or Miami with miles of glitzy, high-rise hotels lining the shore.

Over a million tourists visited the island last year and for the first time tourism edged out sugar as the number one foreign-exchange earner. The Government hopes to have more than two million visitors a year by the turn of the century. That's roughly one tourist for every two Cubans. The impact is bound to be huge – and not just in relation to prostitution.

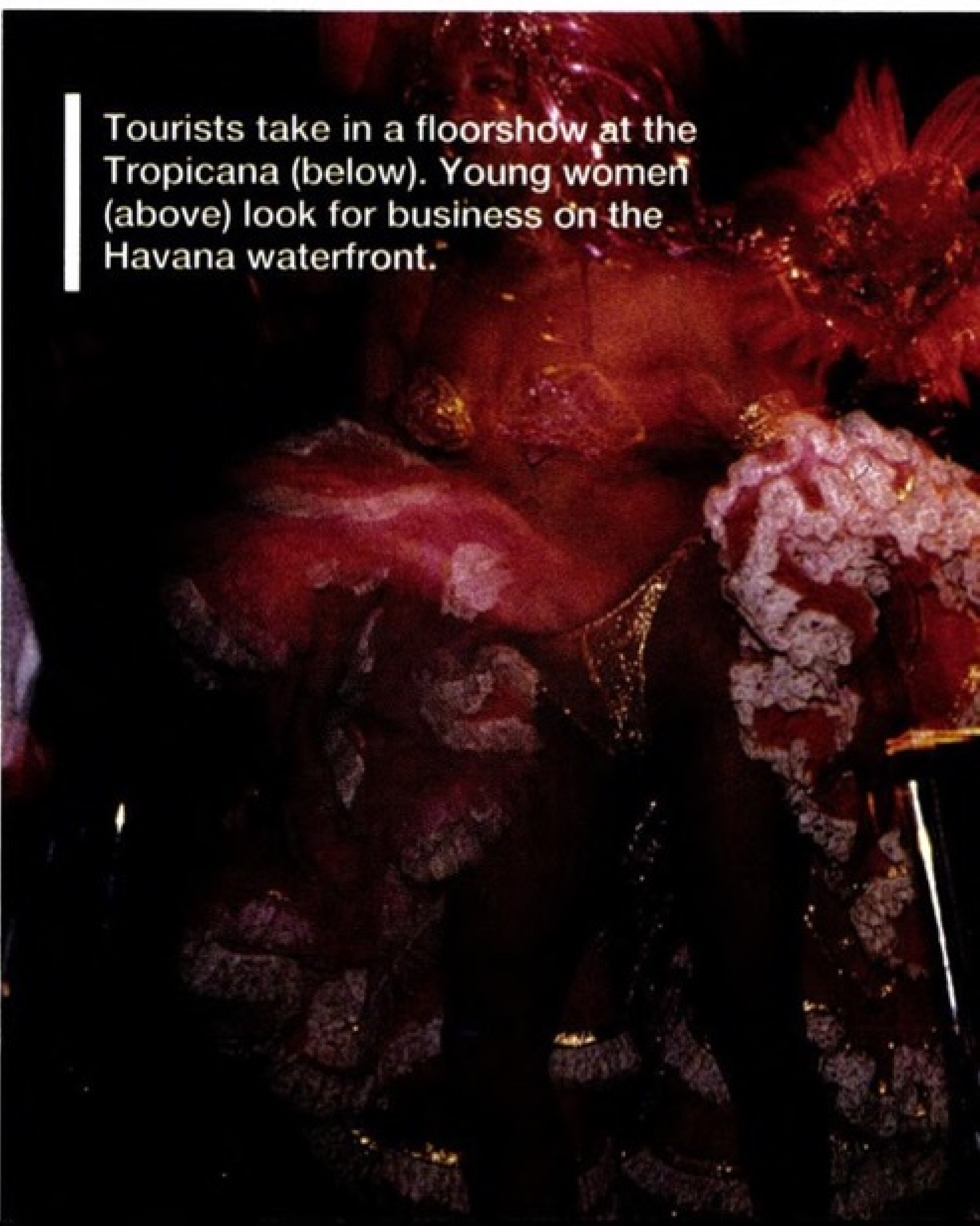
Jinoterismo means more than selling sex. The word is used to describe all those who try to latch onto the tourist dollar: whether they're beggars, freelance tour guides, drug dealers or hustlers selling pilfered rum and cigars. Their numbers keep growing. After the dollar was legalized the flow of migrants from the countryside into Havana jumped from 10,000 to over 26,000 a year.

Worried by the inflow, the Government clamped down on the free movement of its citizens by restricting internal migration. Nonetheless, thousands of newcomers continue to be drawn to Havana and other tourist enclaves.

Supporters of the tourism push say the country has no choice. The Cuban social critic Juan Antonio Blanco calls tourism 'chemotherapy for the economy'. Blanco argues that maintaining Cuba's free education, healthcare, food and social security system requires as much hard currency as possible in the shortest possible time. He sees tourism as the only answer.*

That may be the case. But tourism also has a political impact. Cuban socialism is based on the concept of equality and equal

BELOW: MARC POKEMPNER / IMPACT VISUALS



Tourists take in a floorshow at the Tropicana (below). Young women (above) look for business on the Havana waterfront.

access. The tourist industry challenges that ideology because it operates as a dollar-dependent enclave within the country. Cubans working in the industry can earn dollars. But they spend them on basics like food and clothing. You won't find them lounging around the hotel pool.

This creates a system some critics have called 'tourist apartheid'. And it is not always subtle. One foreign resident I speak to tells me that her Cuban husband is often harassed when he goes to hotels to meet North American visitors. Other Cubans I meet complain about walking down the street with foreigners and being challenged for identification by police. 'There's a different set of rules for tourists than for Cubans,' a Canadian student studying in Havana says. 'Cubans feel they're not respected in the same way and they resent it.'

Ministry of Tourism officials sound like unapologetic capitalists when they trumpet the industry's projected growth figures. When I speak with Eddy Rodriguez de la Vega, the portly 50-something Vice-Minister of Tourism, he tells me that talk of sex tourism is 'propaganda' being spread by 'enemies of the Revolution'.

His assistant hands me an impressive sheaf of computer-generated charts and statistical tables. 'This will be a short interview,' the Vice-Minister says, 'because the answers to all your questions are right there.' They aren't, but they aren't with Mr de la Vega either. Dressed informally in loose-fitting jeans with a cigar screwed into the corner of his mouth, he blithely dismisses any suggestion that tourism might have a downside.

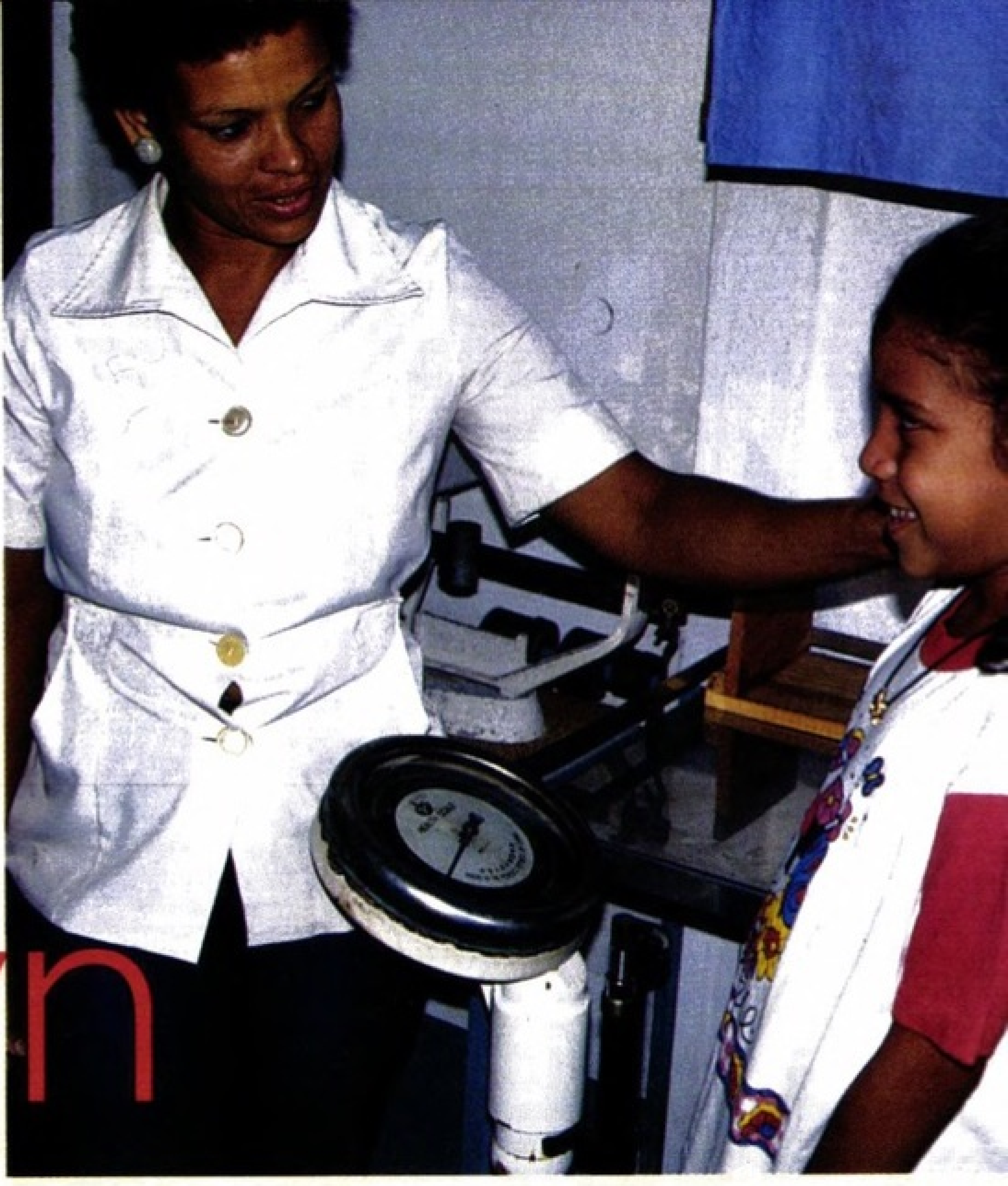
'The Cuban people know that all the profits from tourism are destined to purchase more food and medicine,' he declares. 'That makes the inequalities both more understandable and more acceptable.' I am not reassured. ■

**Cuba: Talking about the Revolution, Conversations with Juan Antonio Blanco* by Medea Benjamin, Ocean Press, Melbourne, 1997.

Havana Club

ERIC MILLER / IMPACT VISUALS

Jewels in the crown



WAYNE ELLWOOD

Protecting the gains of the Revolution in healthcare and education...

THE MONCADA BARRACKS in the city of Santiago is one of Cuba's political shrines. It was here on 26 July 1953 that a young Fidel Castro and a hundred other young men attacked the second largest military garrison in the country, hoping to spark a mass uprising against the corrupt Batista regime. The attack was a spectacular failure: most of the rebels were captured, tortured and murdered. A handful of others, including Fidel, were sent to prison on the Isle of Pines.

Today there is a small museum in the front of the barracks where the bullet holes from the attack are still visible. Inside, several rooms covered with newspaper blow-ups recount the assault. In a glass display case there is a meticulous scale model of the barracks and the surrounding streets with checked lines outlining the routes of the insurgents.

But most of the once-despised buildings have been turned into a school, the *Ciudad Escolar 26 de Julio.* As I make my way through the grounds, the old barracks buildings echo to the shrieks and laughter of a thousand children. It's the end of the day and kids are careening around the yard, bouncing balls, playing tag and hopscotch. Each wears the jaunty primary school uniform seen across the country: red skirt or trousers with a white shirt or blouse and a blue or red bandana tied around the neck. Parents and grandparents make their way through the narrow gate preparing to walk their charges home.

Free education is one of the great accomplishments of the Revolution. School is compulsory up to the age of 16 and Cubans are rightly proud of the system they've built. Literacy levels of 95 per cent are comparable to Canada or Sweden. And with just two per cent of Latin America's population the country has almost 12 per cent of its scientists. Out of a population of 11 million, more than half-a-million are university graduates.

The other major accomplishment of the Revolution has been healthcare, which is free to every citizen by right. In all of the Third World no country has achieved such remarkable success in such a short period of time. Basic health indicators are head and shoulders above Third World norms and in some cases ahead of Western countries. According to UNICEF, the infant mortality rate in Cuba fell from 60 deaths per thousand in 1958 to 7.9 in 1996, roughly half that of Washington DC. That accomplishment is even more remarkable knowing that the country has a gross domestic product lower than any other Latin American nation and less than a twentieth of the US. Average life expectancy is 75 years, far ahead of the Third World average of 57.

No Third World country has achieved such remarkable success in so short a time

There is an impressive layered system of healthcare delivery from *consultorios* (small family clinics) to polyclinics, to hospitals and national research institutes. Family physicians and medical services are readily available from one end of the island to the other.

Diolaida Guzman is a nurse at a consultorio in the countryside near Baracoa, at the north-east tip of the island. The clinic services the local farming community and the lush mountains surrounding it are planted with cocoa, coffee, coconuts and oranges.

'I visit families with children under a year old every 15 days,' she explains. 'I teach them about hygiene. I check to see if the child's crib is clean, if the utensils are clean, if they're boiling water. But we don't get many serious illnesses with children here.'

The most common adult complaint is

hypertension, a disease more usually associated with rich countries than poor ones. 'Those patients come every day to have their blood pressure taken,' says Diolaida. 'We talk about the need for rest and a change in diet, especially to lower their salt and fat intake. If something is serious enough we send patients to the polyclinic in Jamal five kilometres from here.'

Free, high-quality healthcare and free education are the foundation of the Castro Government's legitimacy. Yet, despite Havana's best efforts to maintain health and education budgets, cracks are beginning to show. Schools are bereft of supplies, buildings are crumbling. Teachers work in impossible conditions for miserable wages. Laritza, a 22-year-old English teacher, hitchhikes an hour-and-a-half each way to her school in West Havana. 'We have almost nothing,' she says softly, 'no paints, no pencils, no notebooks, no chalk. And now children are coming to school with little in their stomachs.' Laritza makes eight pesos a day (35 cents). But she also works twice a week teaching privately for 30 pesos a session and lives with her mother to save money.

The country's healthcare facilities are also badly run-down and getting worse with the impact of the US economic blockade. A 1996 report by the American Association for World Health (AAWH) found that the tightened US embargo since 1992 has led to 'a marked decline in surgical services, delays in diagnosis and treatment, a decline in quality of hospital care and increased rates of water-borne disease, malnutrition, unnecessary suffering and premature death.'*

Many basic drugs for the treatment of heart disease, asthma and cancer are no longer available since purchases from foreign subsidiaries of US drug companies were outlawed. Even over-the-counter patent drugs like allergy medications and headache tablets are in short supply or available only in dollar stores, thus effectively denying them to millions of Cubans. Pharmacy shelves are empty.

Despite these constraints, doctors and healthcare officials put on a brave face. Still their outrage is palpable – and so it should be. As in Iraq it is individual Cubans – the young, the ill, the elderly – who are suffering most from the destruction of their healthcare system. That is a tragedy. But it is also a crime for which the American Government should be held accountable. The AAWH investigation found that 'only the excellence of the system and the extraordinary dedication of the Cuban medical community have prevented infinitely greater loss of life and suffering'. ■

******The Impact of the US Embargo on Health & Nutrition in Cuba*, **American Association for World Health, Washington, 1997.**

People's power and the Politburo

The limits of democracy in a one-party state...

I MISSED the Pope's trip to Cuba. However, there were nearly 3,000 other foreign journalists there and for five days this past January the historic event dominated the international media and captured the attention of the world. The visit was high drama full of clichéd symbolism. Here were two old men in the twilight of their careers. The Last Marxist versus the Polish Pope who helped bring down communism in Eastern Europe.

For his part John Paul performed pretty much the way the Cuban Government hoped he would. He blasted the US economic embargo as 'unjust and ethically unacceptable' and denounced 'capitalist neo-liberalism' as subordinating human development to 'blind market forces'. He also attacked the 'idols of consumer society' which he said were spreading 'a dangerous crisis of identity in Cuba' – all causes dear to Fidel's heart. But at the same time he picked away at the repressive facade of the Cuban state, calling for religious freedom, respect for civil and political rights and a greater role for the Catholic Church in Cuban society. Like human-rights activists inside the country, the Pope's message was one of reconciliation and dialogue with other voices and other points of view.

In urging an opening-up of political structures the Pope touched on the most contentious and sensitive of all issues – democracy and political freedom. Is Cuba a democracy? Like most questions tinged with ideology the response depends on where you stand.

Many older Cubans are adamantly pro-Castro. They experienced directly the overt racism and widespread poverty of the pre-revolutionary era, a period of nominal democracy. And they understand concretely how their lives have improved. Time and time again I meet older Cubans, simple peasants or workers, who tell me proudly how their daughter is studying to be a doctor or their son to be a bio-chemist. They point out that no country in the world is a pure democracy and that multi-party elections every four years are no guarantee that a government will meet the needs of all its citizens. They're right of course. Cuba had

scores of political parties in the decades leading up to the Batista dictatorship but the country was a democracy in name only. No-one could claim it was a government that represented the majority of Cubans.

So what about the model of socialist democracy that operates in the country today? There is no question that it is very different from the standard American or British models. On the plus side the political system is based on popular participation and citizens can have a meaningful say in matters that affect their lives on a daily basis. And within its own parameters, it appears to work. As one unbending supporter of the Revolution told me: 'I'm not saying we have not made mistakes, we don't have a perfect model either. But I prefer the errors of the Revolution to the virtues of capitalism.'

But the system is also tightly regulated, closely monitored and highly controlled.

The Communist Party of Cuba (CPC) is the only legal political party and it permeates all aspects of life – every workplace and every co-operative has a cadre of Party members. Most of the positions of power and responsibility in all the so-called 'mass organizations' (the Young Communists, the Federation of Cuban Women, the Cuban Workers Central, the National Association of Small Farmers) are dominated by Party loyalists. As the CPC programme says: 'The political organization of our society is based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism... and the CPC is the directing force of this system and of all society.'

At the bottom are the neighbourhood-level Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs). These are organized on a block-by-block basis and are voluntary. The CDRs act as legitimate channels for community problems but they also function as useful posts for Party militants to keep track of their neighbours' business and to intimidate dissenters. As one Cuban exile said: 'You know the local CDR can search your house at will; you have to account for your guests, the smells that come from your kitchen, your clothes, everything.'*

Next are the assemblies of *Poder Popular* (People's Power), local legislatures created in 1976. And at the top is the National Assembly to which delegates were elected by direct ballot for the first time in 1993. You don't have to be a Party member to run for either of these bodies and there are elected members who aren't. But they are a minority. Since what Cubans refer to as the 'triumph-of-the-Revolution', it's been assumed that Party members are the most socially conscious and most dedicated revolutionaries. For anyone with ambitions Party membership is pretty much obligatory.

The National Assembly is dominated by CPC members and the major players in the country's two top governing bodies, the *Consejo de Ministros* (Council of Ministers) and the *Consejo de Estado* (Council of State) are also members of the CP Central Committee or the *Buro Politico* (Politburo). Fidel Castro is indisputably in command of both Party and state political structures. He is President of the Councils of Ministers and State and First Secretary of the Communist Party and Commander in Chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces.

The end result of this close interweaving of Party and politics is a diminished democracy which lives up to Fidel's famous dictum: 'Inside the Revolution, everything; outside the Revolution, nothing.' Dissent and critical debate are allowed, but only to the extent that they support the over-arching goals of the Revolution. Going beyond those limits is not tolerated. Over the years many of the regime's vocal critics (and even some of its supporters) have voted with their feet rather than put up with unacceptable restrictions on their civil and political liberties. As for those Cubans who remain, they simply accept the need for compliance and get on with their lives.

'More and more Cubans are now living with two faces,' my friend Edmundo tells me one day. We are returning from a visit to his sister and his car is misfiring badly because the black market petrol he'd bought had been cut with water. He is complaining about the inefficiency of state controls and the common practice of pilfering on the job. 'On one hand Cubans accept the situation, they don't say anything and get on with living the best they can. At another level they are fed up.'

JANINA STRUK

You can hear that kind of cynical comment often but it needs to be placed in context. Even though Edmundo has a brother in Detroit, he has chosen to stay. That is not untypical: every second Cuban seems to have a relative in Miami or New York. But not all exiles are right-wingers, bitterly opposed to the Castro regime. The majority left simply because they were looking for a more secure and prosperous way of life. Those who remain, like Edmundo, would rather put up with the devil they know than the one they don't – despite the hardships and limited political freedoms.

Many of the regime's vocal critics (and some supporters) have voted with their feet

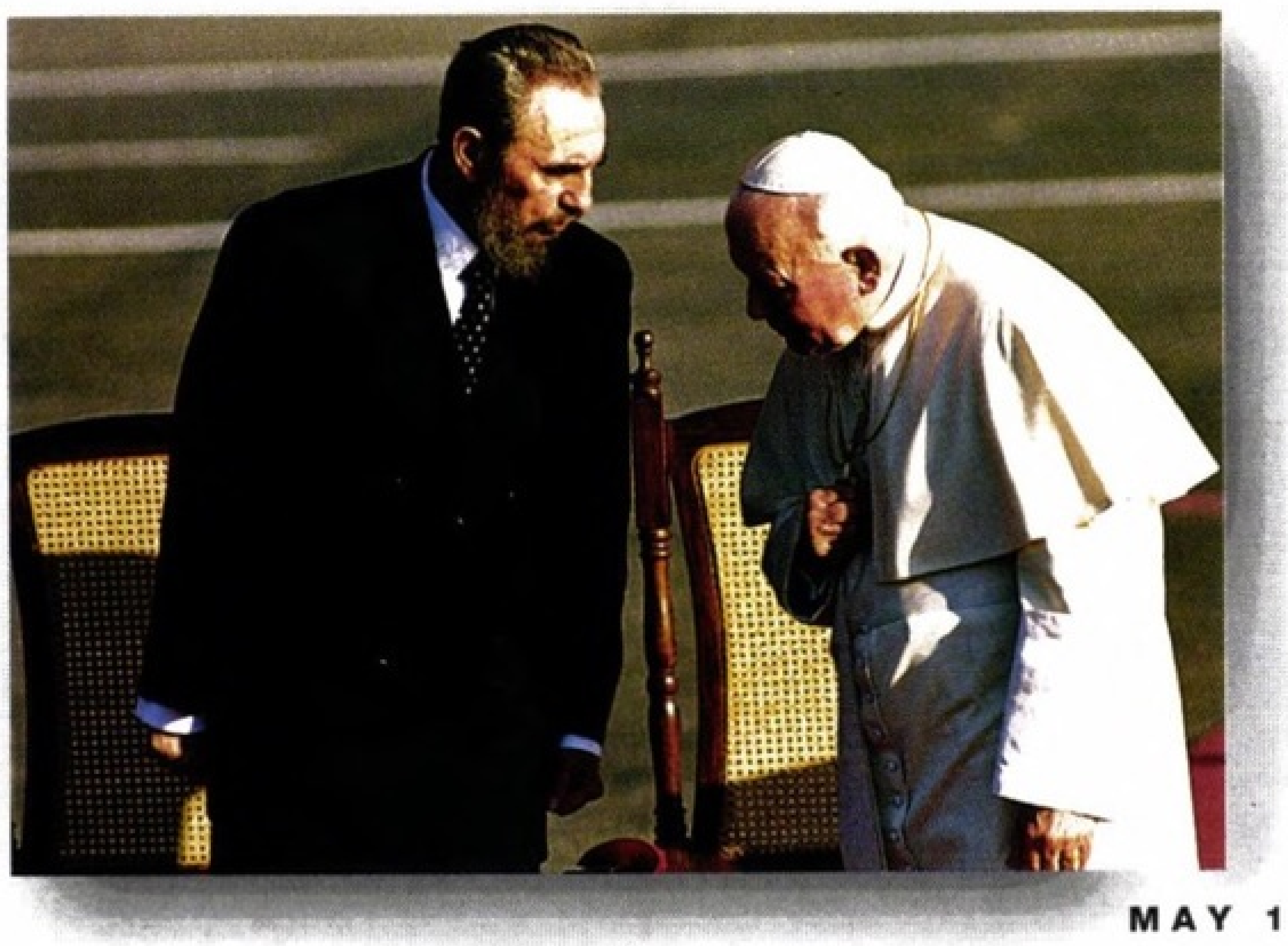
A poll commissioned by the *Miami Herald* in 1994 confirmed strong popular support for Fidel Castro's government: 69 per cent of Cubans think of themselves as revolutionaries, socialists or communists and 58 per cent on balance think the Revolution has more achievements than failures. Even the special rapporteur for Cuba of the UN Human Rights Commission, Carl-Johan Groth, says the regime enjoys 'a credibility and a margin of confidence in broad sectors of the population far greater than observers have believed'.

That majority backing needs to be recognized by critics, especially those in Washington. Inside Cuba there is no evidence of support for the continuing US trade embargo. Nor is there much support from the international community. Last November in a UN resolution censuring the embargo only Uzbekistan and Israel voted with the US. Even the pro-business US Chamber of Commerce has called the embargo 'behaviour unworthy of a great nation'.

Continued American belligerence has strengthened President Castro's grip on the country rather than weakened it. Cubans have always rallied around their leaders in tough times, heeding calls for increased solidarity and vigilance against external threats.

Yes, there have been inexcusable human-rights abuses. But they cannot be discussed outside the context of American hostility. Would any country have been able to nurture an open, tolerant political culture when the world's mightiest nation 140 kilometres away has been conducting a kind of undeclared war against you for

Standing on guard: children oversee casting of ballots for the National Assembly elections (above). President Castro and Pope John Paul II (below) during the papal visit in January 1998.



GEERT VAN KESTERN / CAMERA PRESS

Following Fidel

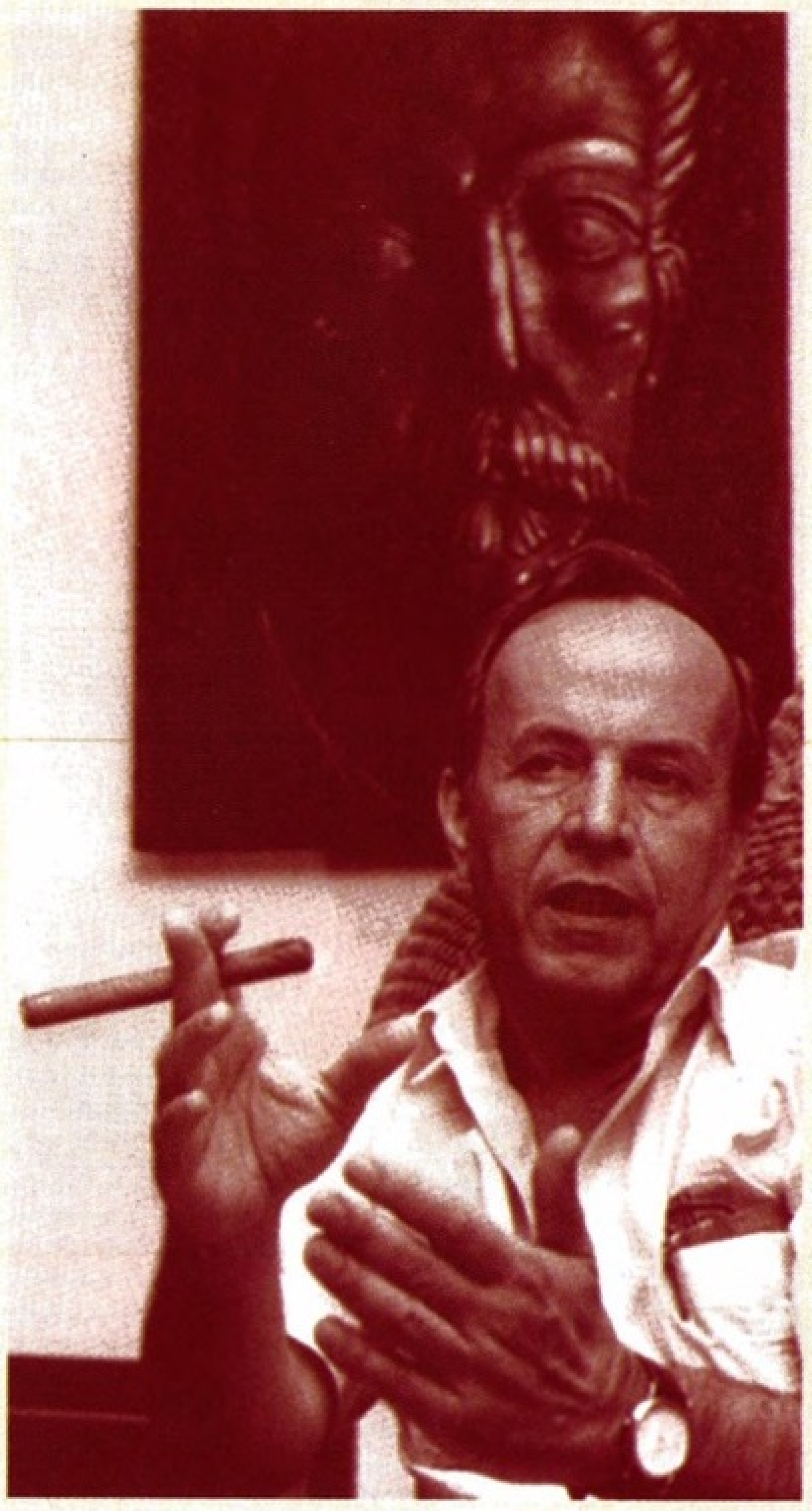
A man of great charisma and dazzling intellect, Fidel Castro is now 71 and showing signs of age. Few can imagine Cuba without their *comandante en jefe* (commander in chief) but a number of new leaders wait in the wings:

Ricardo Alarcón (age 60) Confidante of Castro, President of the National Assembly and former UN Ambassador. Alarcón (right) is a clever, seasoned diplomat and veteran of the revolutionary underground. Touted as the most likely successor.

Carlos Lage (age 46) Vice-president of the Council of State and Minister of the Economy. Former paediatrician, architect of recent economic reforms. Urbane, bright and articulate. Bound to be a front runner.

Raúl Castro (age 66) Minister of the Armed Forces, veteran of the guerrilla struggle. At the apex of power since 1959 though always in his brother's shadow. A political hard-liner with emotional attachment to old-style Soviet orthodoxies. Age is against him but control of the Army means significant clout in the choice of any new leader.

Roberto Robaina (age 42) Former leader of Communist Youth, now Minister of Foreign Affairs. An astute, able, dedicated socialist with strong ties to the Party and Fidel. Possible member of any collective leadership which may emerge.



SEPP SPIEGL / CAMERA PRESS

four decades? Intimidation and hostility have been met with intolerance and paranoia.

At the same time the Cuban people are waking up and beginning to look with new eyes at the world around them. The bearded guerrillas are now near retirement and the question of succession hangs in the air. Who will follow Fidel? And what course will the Revolution take next? (see 'Following Fidel' above).

On one hand Cubans see the social chaos and economic suffering caused by resurgent capitalism in Russia and Eastern Europe. And on the other they look with horror at their Latin American neighbours where neo-liberal economic policies are ravaging the environment and widening the gap between rich and poor. Neither is an example of capitalist development which instills much confidence.

Cuba is on its own in a world where there are no more models. And that is why the island can still remain an example for the rest of us. The creaking edifice of Cuban Communism has shifted dramatically since 1989 and the fall of the Soviet Bloc. And it will continue to shift. More than half of all Cubans have been born since the Revolution. They want to protect the gains of socialism but they are demanding a more open political structure where the rights of the individual are in balance with the rights of society. They are impatient with the all-knowing, rigid paternalism of the old guard.

If the Revolution is to survive it will need to become more flexible and more open to divergent political views in order to achieve a broad democratic consensus.

In the meantime the country's flirtation with market economics may prove President Castro's biggest challenge yet. Protecting the country's social welfare achievements while negotiating the perilous tightrope of globalization will require both a single-minded dedication of purpose and a keen sense of balance. ■

---

*'Searching for Middle Ground: Cuba's Chronic Dilemma' by Holly Ackerman, *Peace Magazine*, Toronto, Jan/Feb 1997.

Action on Cuba

There are over 1,600 solidarity organizations in more than 120 countries. The well-established 'friendship' groups are hard-working and make valuable donations of medical supplies and equipment. But they can be uncritically supportive of the Government.

Aotearoa/New Zealand

NZ Cuba Friendship Society, c/o 3 Oakdale St,
Avonhead, Christchurch. Tel: (03) 358 3668;
e-mail: 1000250.1511@compuserve.com *and*
PO Box 6716, Wellesley St, Auckland.
Tel: (09) 525 5412; Fax: (09) 620 6710
e-mail: 10035.3205@compuserve.com

Australia

Australia Cuba Friendship Association, c/o
Joan Coxsedge, 8 Leicester St, North Balwyn,
VIC 3104. Tel: (03) 9 311 4611

Britain

Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Red Rose Club,
129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7 7QG.
Tel: (0171) 263 6452; Fax (0171) 561 0191;
e-mail: cuba@gn.apc.org Website:
http://www.poptel.org.uk/cuba-solidarity/
Latin American Bureau, 1 Amwell St, London
EC1R 1UL Tel: (0171) 278 2829;
Fax: (0171) 0165; e-mail: lab@gn.apc.org

Canada

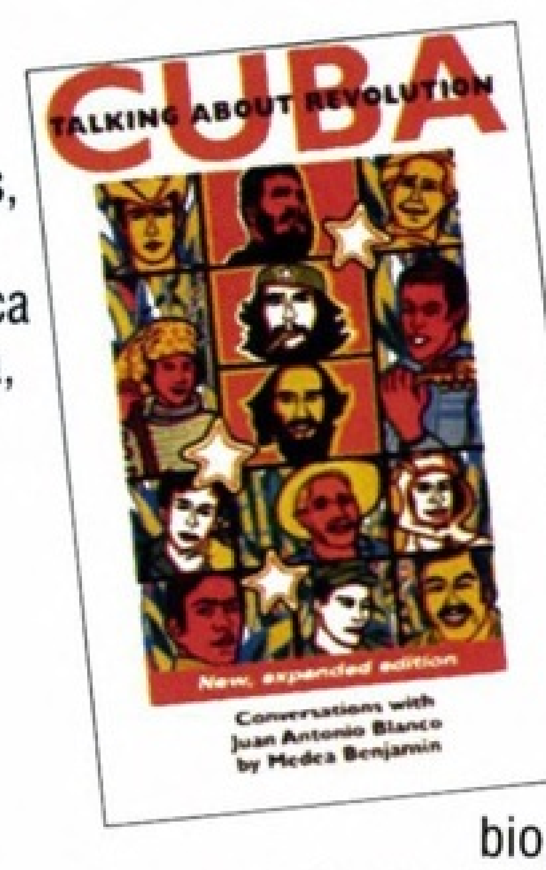
Canadian Cuban Friendship Association (CCFA), PO Box 743, Station F, Toronto, ON
M4Y 2N6. Tel: (416) 654 5585; Fax: (416) 744
6143; e-mail: lmakar@worldy.com
Website: www.worldy.com/~lmakar
CCFA Vancouver, Box 57063, 2458 E Hastings,
Vancouver, BC V5K 5G6. Tel: (604) 940 0420;
Fax: (604) 254 9803; e-mail: pv@minslink.bc.ca
Oxfam Canada, 294 Albert St, Ste 300, Ottawa,
ON Tel: (613) 237 5236; Fax: (613) 237 0524;
e-mail: americas@oxfam.ca

United States

Center for Cuban Studies, 124 W 23rd St,
New York, NY 10011. Tel: (212) 242 0559;
Fax: (212) 242 1937
Cuba Solidarity Network, PO Box 450,
Santa Clara CA 95052. Tel: (510) 273 9199;
e-mail: dwald@igc.apc.org Website:
http://www.igc.apc.org/cubasoli/solinumb.html
Global Exchange, Cuba Project, 2017 Mission
St, Ste 303, San Francisco, CA 94110. Tel: (415)
255 7296; Fax: (415) 255 7498;
e-mail: globalexch@igc.org
Website: http://www.globalexchange.org
Institute for Food and Development Policy,
398 60th St, Oakland, CA 94618.
Tel: (510) 654 4400; Fax: (510) 654 4551;
e-mail: www.foodfirst.org
Website: http:/netspace.org/hungerweb/food-first/index.htm

Cuba

Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), Havana.
Tel: (53 7) 32 3609, 323909 & 323464;
Fax: (53 7) 33 3186
Centre for Investigation of the Global Economy,
5ta Ave No 2010 esq 22, Playa, Havana.
Tel: (53 7) 84 0671, 84 0698; Fax: (53 7) 33 2507



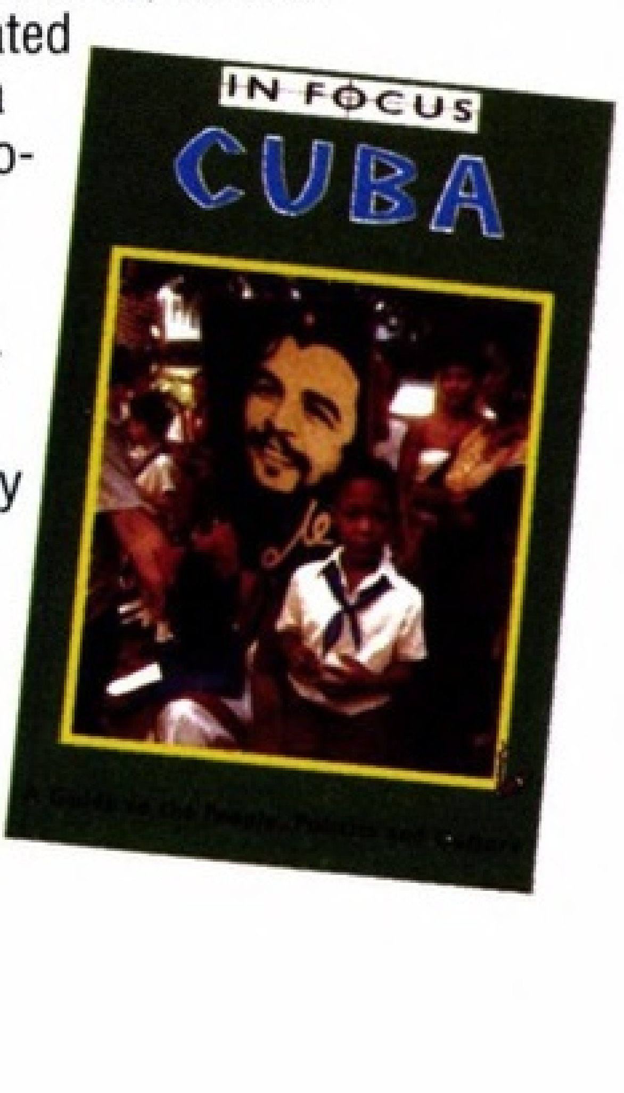
Worth reading... on Cuba

A brief, biased selection of personal favourites.

Compañero: The Life and Death of Che Guevara by Jorge G Castañeda (Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1997) is a beautifully written, meticulously researched biography. Not a hagiography but a sober look at the man and the myth.

Cuba: Talking About Revolution. Conversations with Juan Antonio Blanco by Medea Benjamin (Ocean Press, Melbourne, 1997) is a stimulating, wide-ranging discussion with one of the country's leading free-thinking intellectuals.

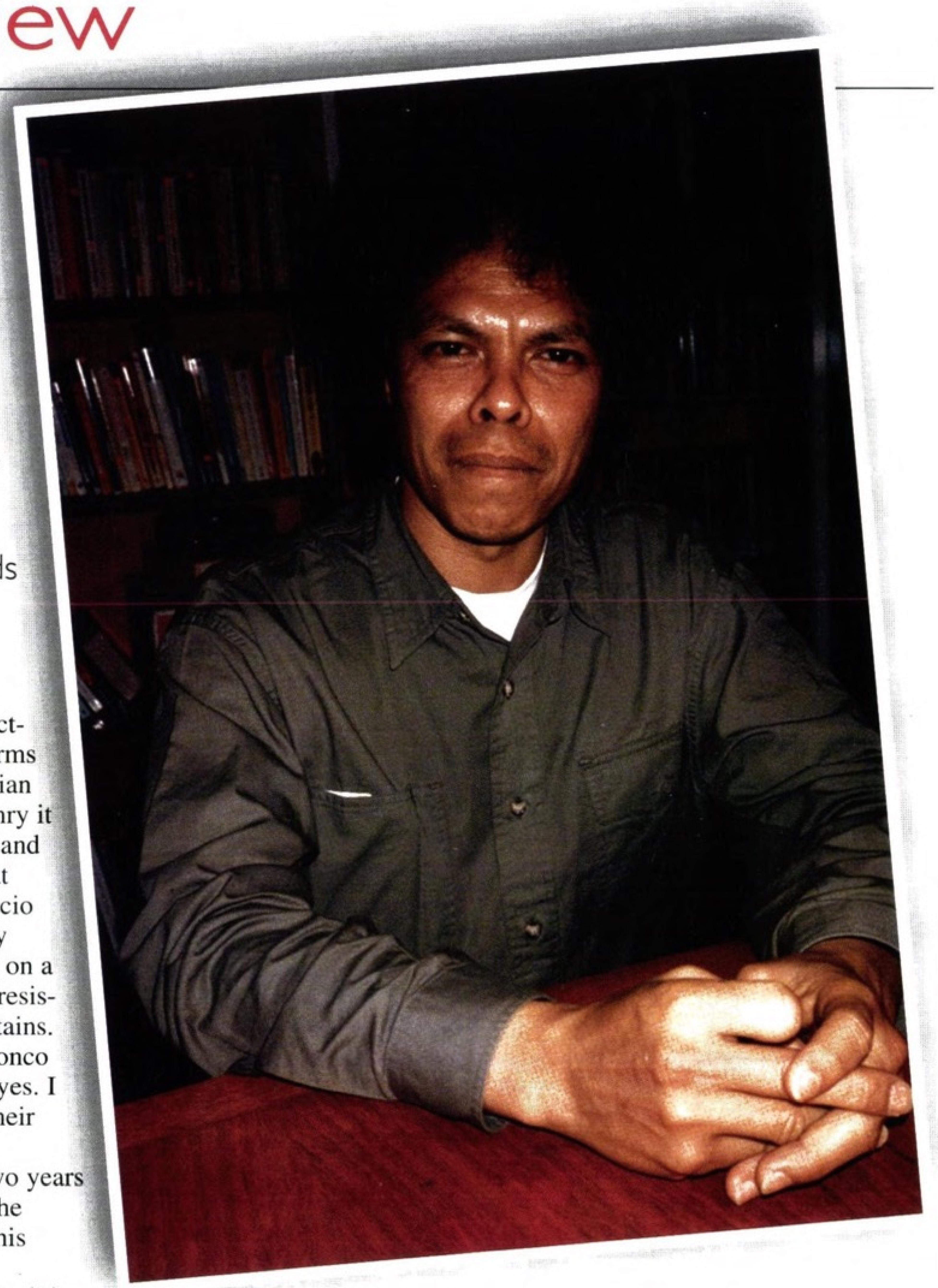
Cuba: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture (Latin American Bureau, London 1995). A smart, opinionated little handbook offering a first-rate, accessible introduction.



Cuba Travel Survival Kit by David Stanley (Lonely Planet, Hawthorn, Australia, 1997). The only travel guide you'll need. Combines knowledgeable, critical comment with helpful advice.

The **NI** Interview

Acacio Marquez



Faith in the freedom of East Timor runs deeply through the veins of its people, one of whom tracked the Hawk jets that bombed his people to their nesting grounds in Britain. He spoke to **David Ransom**.

Among the first signs of economic 'Asian 'flu' infecting Western countries were the worried faces of arms dealers reviewing their contracts with the Indonesian regime. Without a constant supply of such weaponry it will be much more difficult for President Suharto and his cronies to keep the people of East Timor – or, for that matter, Indonesia itself – in their place. The story of Acacio Marquez shows why. In 1975, when the Indonesian army invaded East Timor, Acacio was ten years old and living on a small farm with his parents. Forewarned by his uncle, a resistance commander, he fled with his family into the mountains. 'There we saw the British Hawk aircraft and also the Bronco planes from the United States. I saw this with my own eyes. I know that a lot of innocent civilians died as a result of their bombing.'

The memory has stayed with him ever since. After two years of near-starvation in the mountains he was captured by the Indonesian army. He was taken back to his village with his mother.

'They came to the villages with Landrovers and arrested the remaining men, who went "missing" and were never seen alive again,' says Acacio. 'My father escaped to the mountains – every family had links with the underground. Before long I was arrested and put in a prison camp for two years. In 1989 I was arrested again because I took part in a demonstration when the Pope visited East Timor, and I was tortured with electric shocks in Dili. I was released after a week, then arrested once more because I was found taking supplies to the mountains. I escaped and left for Jakarta.

'In Jakarta my situation was very hard. At that time there were only a few East Timorese there. I lived alone and sold newspapers to try to earn a living. The Indonesian people were friendly enough, and most of the ones I met also supported the democracy movement, wanted Suharto to be finished with as quickly as possible.'

Acacio was not prepared to live out his life in lonely exile, and his odyssey took a new turn. 'I left Indonesia because I wanted to tell people around the world the real situation in East Timor. I went first to Hong Kong and Macao, where I got Portuguese citizenship. I came to London because Britain is the number-one arms supplier to Indonesia. I came to tell the people in Britain that the arms that are sold to Indonesia are used to oppress the East Timorese people.

'As soon as I arrived I took part in a demonstration outside the Department of Trade and Industry. After this we organized to do more in London and Liverpool and Leeds and at the Farnborough Air Show, where we went with members of the Kurdish community.

'In May last year I and three others were arrested in Preston, where we trespassed and entered the British Aerospace factory. After we were arrested we refused to give our names to the police, so they put us in prison. Last November we entered British Aerospace again and were arrested once more and kept in police custody.

'We refused to co-operate with the British Government because we know that Hawk aircraft are being used in East Timor, killing people in the mountains. What we are doing is for peace, to stop the continuing conflict. Twice more we refused to co-operate and spent three weeks in prison altogether. But we are not criminals: we are not like the British Government in East Timor, supporting the Indonesian regime.'

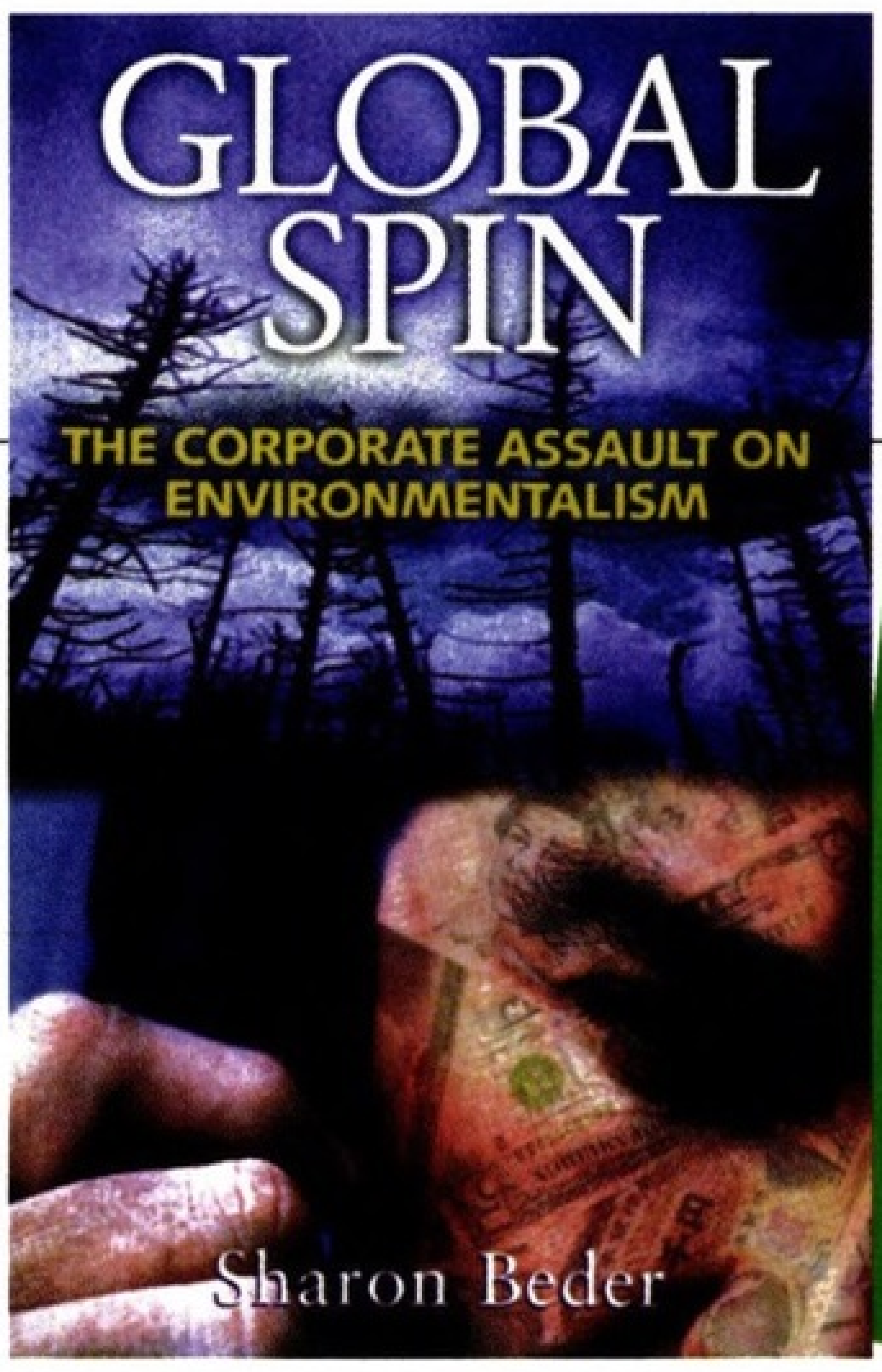
Famously, last year, a jury refused to convict 'Ploughshares' trespassers who set about Hawk aircraft with hammers. The New Labour Government in Britain has introduced a human-rights dimension to its foreign policy and the notion of 'coherence' across the whole range of its objectives. This did not, however, prevent the shipping of more Hawks to Indonesia under a contract signed by the previous government.

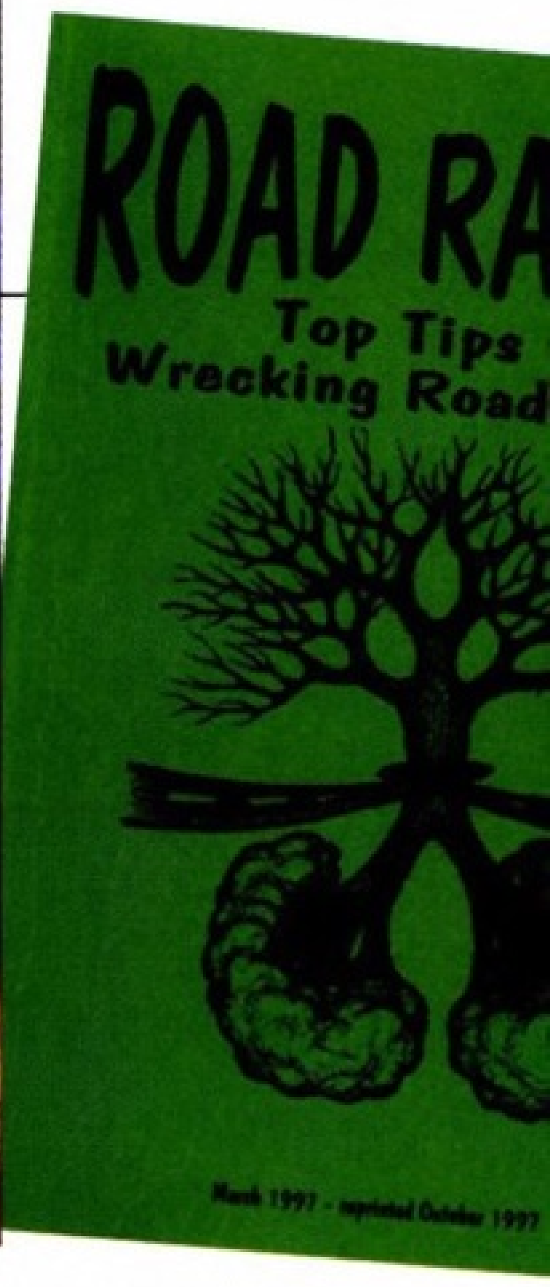
Even so, Acacio is disarmingly sanguine. 'I have a letter from the British Foreign Office, saying they will visit East Timor when the British take on the presidency of the European Community for the first six months of 1998,' he says. 'I hope the British Government will keep its promises.'

He reckons it's up to the British people to make sure that they do, and he's confident that they will: 'My personal message is to thank the people in many countries around the world for their support and loyalty when it comes to the situation in East Timor.' ■

For further information contact **Liverpool Catholic Worker, 1 Home Street, Liverpool L6 5EH, UK, Tel: +44 151 264**

Reviews





books

Global Spin

The corporate assault on environmentalism

by **Sharon Beder**
(Green Books/Chelsea Green Publishing, ISBN 1- 870098-67-6 in UK, 1-890132-12-8 in US).

Road Raging

Top Tips for Wrecking Roadbuilding

by **Road Alert!**
(Road Alert!, ISBN 0-9531852-0-6)

Clean and Competitive?

Motivating environmental performance in industry

by **Rupert Howes**, **Jim Skea** and **Bob Whelan**
(Earthscan ISBN 1-85383-490-4)

If you care a fig for either democracy or the environment, then **Global Spin** is a book for you. It is a thorough – and thoroughly shocking – account of the sophisticated techniques being used around the world to undermine environmentalism and reset the agenda to status quo.

Sharon Beder, a senior science lecturer at the Australian University of Woolongong, details a wide array of strategies. For example, the use of specialized PR firms to create environmental front (or 'astroturf' groups) to further corporate causes By manipulating politicians, the media, and community groups, the anti-green spin doctors weave their subtle and invisible webs. Beder cites an alarming plethora of examples from North America, Australasia, Britain and other European countries and reveals the links between green-sounding bodies and their corporate backers and creators.

So, the National Wetlands Coalition with its flying duck motif is, we learn, funded by Mobil and Shell; the Clean Air Working Group is formed by coal companies, and the Australian Mothers Opposing Pollution group, whose prime purpose is to oppose plastic milk bottles, is run by a PR company boss who also happens to be a consultant to the Association of Liquid Paperboard Carton Manufacturers.

The covert power of corporations is making itself felt at every level, from government to the street – as US citizen Betty Jane Blake discovered. When she opposed developer Terra Homes Inc. who wanted to cut down some trees in her street, she found herself faced with a $6.6 million law suit from the company for defamation, interference with business and trespass. Her crime: she had put up signs saying 'This neighbourhood will not be Terrarized' and tied red ribbons around the tree trunks. The company also sued all residents who attended a protest meeting and who, through fear, then abandoned the campaign.

This is absurd yet depressing stuff and it leads the author to the inevitable conclusion: 'A new wave of environmentalism is now called for that will engage with the task of exposing corporate myths and methods of manipulation.' Or in the words of one *Earth Island Journal* writer: 'We've simply got to get the hogs out of the creek. As Aunt Eula knew, this is not a chore to undertake with your best trousers, politely pleading: "Here hog, here hog... pretty, please". To get hogs out of the creek, you have to put your shoulders to them – and shove... Yet most national environmental

music

All That Jazz: the Best of Ute Lemper

by **Ute Lemper** *(Decca 458 931-2CD)*

The Seven Deadly Sins/Berlin Theatre Songs

by **Lotte Lenya**
(Sony Classical MHK 63222CD)

It's hard to resist any song that declares, with Ute Lemper's typically grand flourish, 'I am a vamp!' before going on to detail some of the items – men apart – the vamp in question has in her collection: 'the Weimar constitution / also Hitler's first moustache'.

'I am a vamp', a risqué cabaret song dating from the period that was described by Christopher Isherwood's stories and Bob Fosse's Oscar-laden film *Cabaret*, is just one song on Decca's essential Lemper compilation. Although the release of **All That Jazz** is tied neatly to Lemper's current starring role on the London stage in the musical *Chicago*, this is the latest album in which the blonde chanteuse works her elegance around the 1930s Berlin cabaret and theatre songs. She looks like Dietrich; detractors might even say that she's made a career out of it.

That's unfair, of course. Lemper has a formidable presence which, coupled with her dramatic and subtle musicality, makes up an undeniable talent. Yet her success in delivering Berlin-orientated material begs certain questions about just why pre-war Berlin exerts its pervasive fascination over Western culture. From the safe distance of time, pre-1933 Berlin is infused with a seedy glamour in which life is dangerous and sexy. The word most often used is decadence – yet decadence, with its connotations of decline – is misleading. The Nazi's themselves used to define 'degenerate' (*entartete*) art and Decca have an immensely fine series of records to prove it. What Kurt Weill and Bertholdt Brecht's music celebrates is a culture of upheaval. Berlin was seething with ideas about sexual liberation – check Lemper's gay-friendly 'The Lavender Song' or 'When That Special Girlfriend' – and art, as well as politics. With such a vibrant concentration, it's little wonder that the place is remembered as the site of that special, naughty party that nobody went to at the time. Its modern day attraction perhaps really lies in a nostalgia for sensation. Lemper's songs capture this sense of loss well: they are infused with all the gestures of defiance. Indeed, that's what they are: gestures sung by a siren.

Ute Lemper, elegantly defiant

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

Recorded in the ruined Berlin of 1956, Lotte Lenya's re-released album **Seven Deadly Sins** tells a different story. Lenya left Germany soon after Hitler's rise to power, accompanied by her husband Kurt Weill, who, as both a Jew and a composer using the jazz idiom, was doubly 'degenerate'. The occasion of this recording marked her return several years after Weill's death in the US. Lenya is the definitive voice of Weill's songs: it's possible to see the stage's characters – the forlorn woman of 'Surabaya Johnny' or the vicious picture of Mack the Knife – for the street creatures they are, people whose struggle with economic and moral reality is recognizable still. Weill's songs take human emotion as their themes and it's possible to see in Lenya's renditions the defiance and spirit that the Nazi's feared. Electrifying.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ LG

GING
ilding

organizations today are indeed dressed in their Sunday trousers, engaged with soft-hands work of lawyers and lobbyists in Washington, sincerely but futilely attempting to negotiate the relative positions of hogs...'

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆

One group of people who cannot be accused of wearing their best trousers and saying 'pretty please' to pigs, is Britain's anti-road campaigners. **Road Raging** tells you really everything you need to know about how to do a direct-action campaign and is equally applicable to stopping any kind of destructive development. It ranges from how to defend yourself in court to how to build a toilet up a tree.

And there's something here for everyone, everywhere, from the hard edges of dealing with police violence to stopping the traffic in your city by taking part in a 'critical mass' cycle ride to just enjoying a 'reclaim the street party'.

This is a clear, well thought-through, easy-to-use guide, which manages to be practical, sensible *and* inspirational. Direct Action isn't only about chaining yourself to trees. It can also, and more appropriately be about targeting politicians and attending shareholder's meetings.

Road Raging is available by mail order from Road Alert!, PO Box 5544, Newbury, RG14 7YB, England or on the Worldwide Web at http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/campaignsn/ef/rr/index.html

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

Taking quite a different tack is **Clean and Competitive?** This is definitely a 'Sunday trouser' job. The underlying premise seems to be that industry must be worked with, not against, to be 'greened'. The study finds that some 'patchy' progress has been made towards sustainability, while issues like climate change remain unaddressed. In the end one is left with a sense of some shift in attitudes but little concrete evidence of real change. Rather, perhaps, a sense of a group of people 'sincerely but futilely attempting to negotiate the relative positions of hogs...'

Politics ☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆

VB

STAR RATING

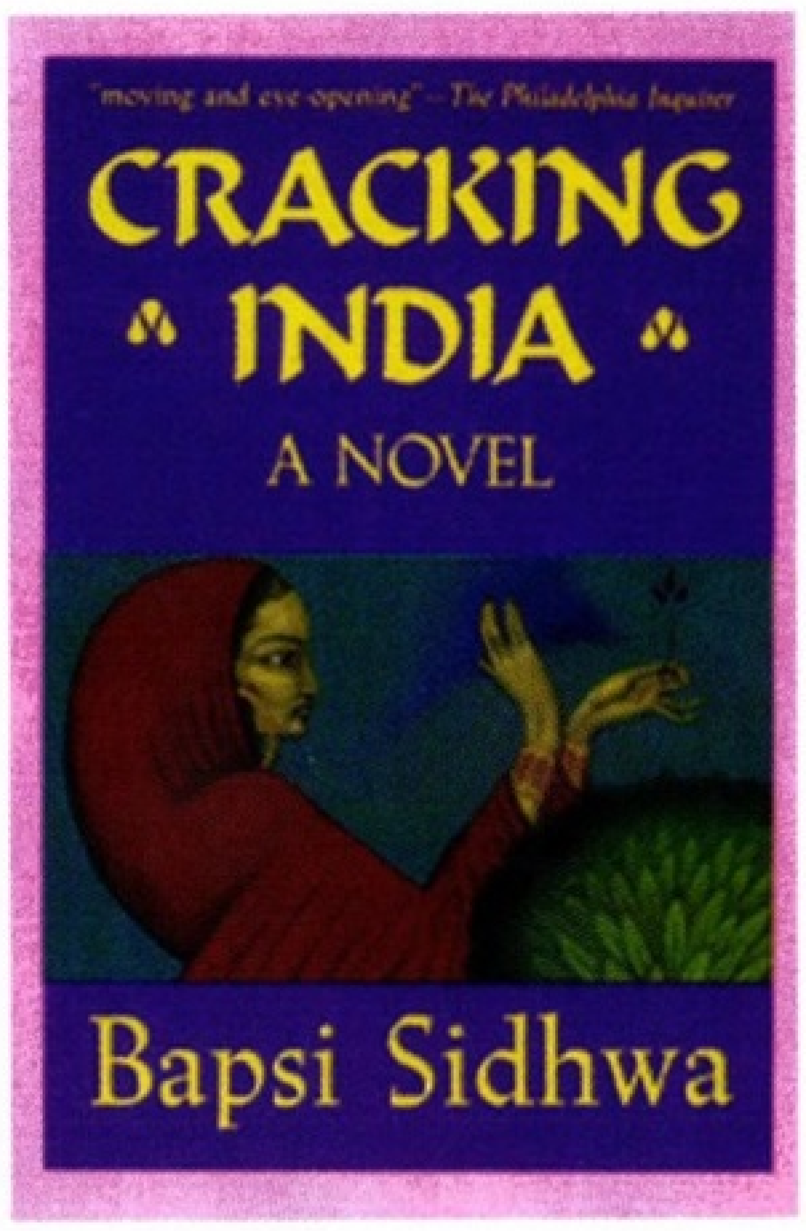
Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Ice-Candy-Man/Cracking India

...being the book that precisely captured a decisive moment in history.

I REMEMBER the envious intellectual sniffing among Bombay's literati that in 1988 greeted **Ice-Candy-Man**, Bapsi Sidhwa's rambunctious novel about the partition of India. Here was a book that was fresh and funny, completely unpretentious, which nevertheless reached out to the pain of a subcontinent and held it in its tenacious little clasp without so much as a beg your pardon.

For me Sidhwa's book precisely captured that decisive moment in history when 'one day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian', when identities that existed side-by-side get sharpened like swords against each other. It is a story which has been repeated in various attempts at genocide and 'ethnic cleansing' the world over, and which, in the case of India and Pakistan uprooted seven million Muslims and five million Hindus and Sikhs as they fled from massacres to cross newly-created borders. The legacy of this tumult is the continual chafing of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, with periodic eruptions of violence stirred up now – as then – by political interests and local gangsters. So supposedly sensitive is the issue that government media in India will often demurely speak of 'attacks by members of one community against members of another'. What hope then for a book that attempts to tell it like it is?



Ice-Candy-Man is inexplicably neglected. It's compelling, brimful of anecdotes rendered in Sidhwa's caustic, unfussy style. She's a superb storyteller, sprinkling the book with tersely-captured vignettes, which increasingly knit together into a story of passion and betrayal, 'the unscrupulous nature of desire' and 'the pitiless face of love'. Unavailable for a while, it's re-emerged with an awkward new name – **Cracking India**.

Sidhwa's narrator is Lenny, a Parsi girl with a 'truth-infected tongue' who turns eight on the day partition is announced. Lame in one foot and indulged by her reasonably well-off parents, Lenny is ferried around Lahore by her beloved Hindu Ayah (nanny) whose 'spherical attractions' draw a varied group of suitors eager to dispense ice-lollies, silk doilies, massages and other gifts. Here's how we first meet Lenny:

'Lordly, lounging in my briskly rolling pram, immersed in dreams, my private world is rudely popped by the sudden appearance of an English gnome wagging a leathery finger in my ayah's face. But for keen reflexes that enable her to pull the carriage up short there might have been an accident: and blood spilled on Warris Road. Wagging his finger over my head into Ayah's alarmed face, he tut-tuts: "Let her walk. Shame, shame! Such a big girl in a pram! She's at least four!"

He smiles down at me, his brown eyes twinkling intolerance. I look at him politely, concealing my complacence. [...]

"Come on. Up, up!" he says, crooking a beckoning finger.

"She not walk much... she get tired," drawls Ayah. And simultaneously I raise my trouser cuff to reveal the leather straps and wicked steel callipers harnessing my right boot.

Confronted by Ayah's liquid eyes and prim gloating, and the triumphant revelation of my callipers, the Englishman withers.'

Lenny's deformed foot sets her proudly apart from other children, spares her the tedium of school – she receives private tuition by the odorous Mrs Pen – and gives her entry into the world of adults. Cared for by Ayah, she observes her romances and admirers as well as the lives of other servants and relatives. There is Cousin who thinks he has turned into a honeycomb when he discovers ejaculation and is besotted with Lenny, or Dr Manek who can fart on cue.

With her throng of characters, Sidhwa paints a microcosm of Pakistani society, filtered through Lenny's irreverent and innocent eye which values people regardless of their social standing and rejoices in their lusts and longings. Born into the tiny Parsi community, Lenny is outside the communal frenzy that follows, but emotionally torn by the violence engulfing her friends. If Sidhwa is partisan, it is in her contempt of politicians pursuing separatist agendas, dividing maps in state rooms.

The vortex of violence that soon follows sucks up Ayah and her Muslim admirer Ice-Candy-Man just as it rips apart other lives. But Sidhwa stays true to her characters: they refuse to give up on life, stop joking or turn into tragic symbols. All of which brings home the horror of what they survive. As men lose their senses, raping, killing, and looting, women reveal their strengths, building links across the divided communities, sheltering survivors, insisting on continuity.

Ice-Candy-Man is a great, thronging bazaar of a book, bustling with riches. With plans afoot for a film, it deserves to be better-known. ■

Dinyar Godrej

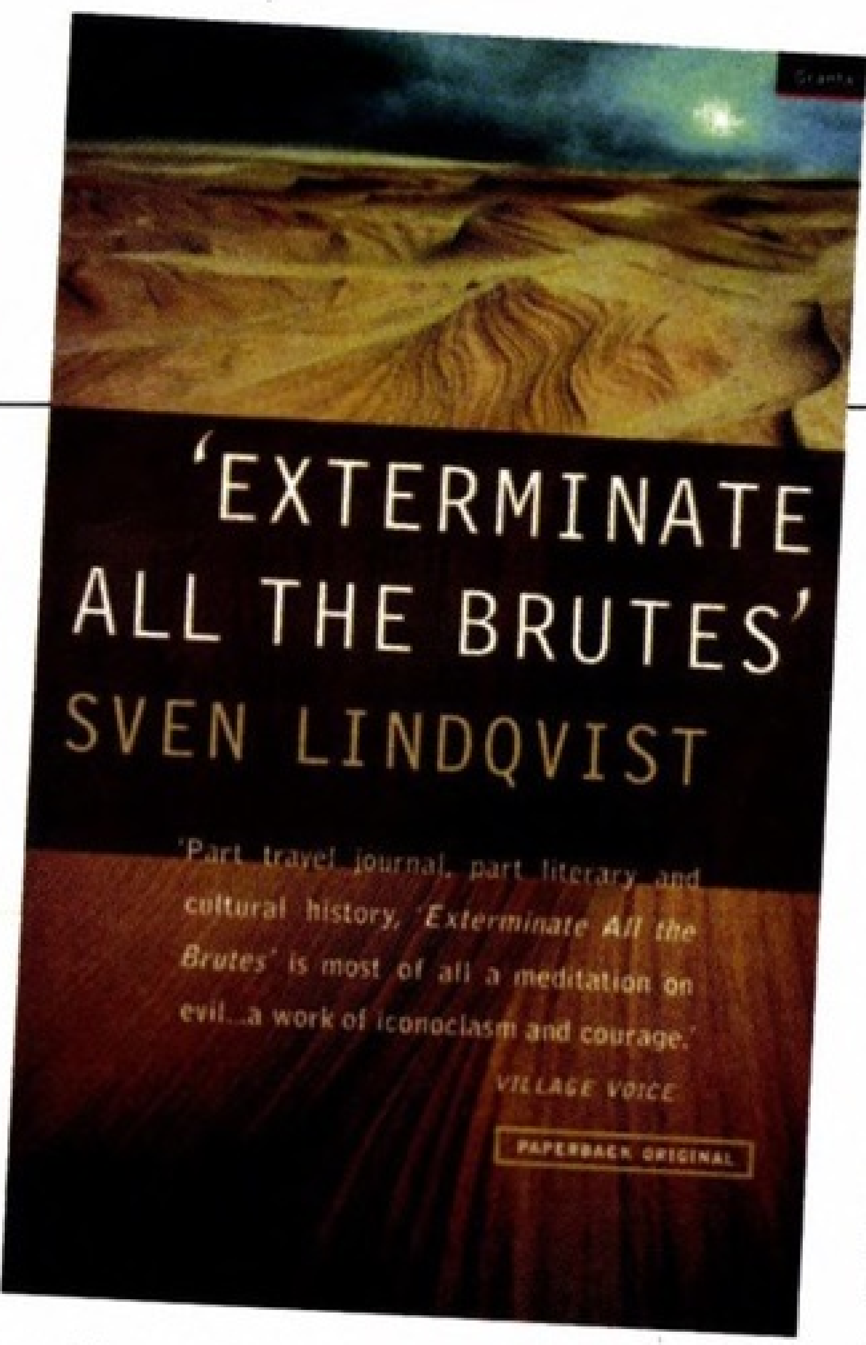
Ice-Candy-Man by Bapsi Sidhwa is now available as **Cracking India** through Milkweed Editions (ISBN: 0915942565).

Reviews continued

books

'Exterminate All the Brutes'

by **Sven Lindqvist**
(Granta Books ISBN 1-86207-017-2)



'EXTERMINATE ALL THE BRUTES'
SVEN LINDQVIST
'Part travel journal, part literary and cultural history, *'Exterminate All the Brutes'* is most of all a meditation on evil...a work of iconoclasm and courage.'
VILLAGE VOICE
PAPERBACK ORIGINAL

Taking as a starting point the Joseph Conrad novella *The Heart of Darkness*, Lindqvist attempts to relate Kurtz's horrific words 'exterminate all the brutes' to history.

But this is no simple reading-room hatchet job. Lindqvist travels by bus and four-wheel drive across the Sahara Desert from El Goléa in Algeria to Zinder in Niger. He disappears into the desert armed with only a laptop and a library of a hundred disks containing 'knowledge'. But, as his opening words declare: 'It is not only knowledge we lack. What is missing is the courage to understand what we know and to draw conclusions.'

The knowledge he draws on comes from politicians, historians, explorers and journalists from the seventeenth century onwards. He charts the imperialist tradition of European Empires, the 'progress' from the first mass extermination in the Canary Islands to the Jewish holocaust. And Lindqvist draws conclusions. He turns the accepted understanding of Conrad's work – the author's social racism – on its head. The journey into the *Heart of Darkness* becomes a journey into the annals of European history: where Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection validates genocide, where mass extermination is euphemistically described as the civilizing influence of commercial enterprise. European 'heroes' become glory-seeking murderers. Conrad's novella consciously described these things.

Stylistically, this book integrates criticism, cultural history and travel writing in a very original format. This may sound a paradox, and I have no intention of reducing the subject matter to mere content, but **'Exterminate All the Brutes'** is beautifully written. Lindqvist succeeds in totally engaging the reader with the horrific poetry of his prose.

A book like Lindqvist's – one that re-explores texts through history – is the way literary criticism has been heading for some time: away from the ironic and playful contradiction of post-modernism. There is no room for irony and play when discussing the wilful and deliberate annihilation of whole peoples by Europeans for economic gain. **'Exterminate All the Brutes'** is, above all, a work of scholarship with no pretence to academic objectivity.

Objectivity, as Edward Said has pointed out, belies ideology and 'truth'. This book should be school curriculum material for every child. It might also make Western history teachers question the inherited narrative of the subject they lecture.

How do you discover the book you have always wanted to read, but had no idea had even been written? Tucked on the bottom shelf of the Africa Travel section, Sven Lindqvist's **'Exterminate All the Brutes'** should stand on the same shelf as Said's *Orientalism*. It is a more direct, more passionate piece of writing: 'My stomach is being filled with a great blood blister. My whole belly is full of black blood.'

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆ DD

Reviewers: **Louise Gray, David Deemer, Vanessa Baird**
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

The **NI** Crossword

No. 21 by Axe

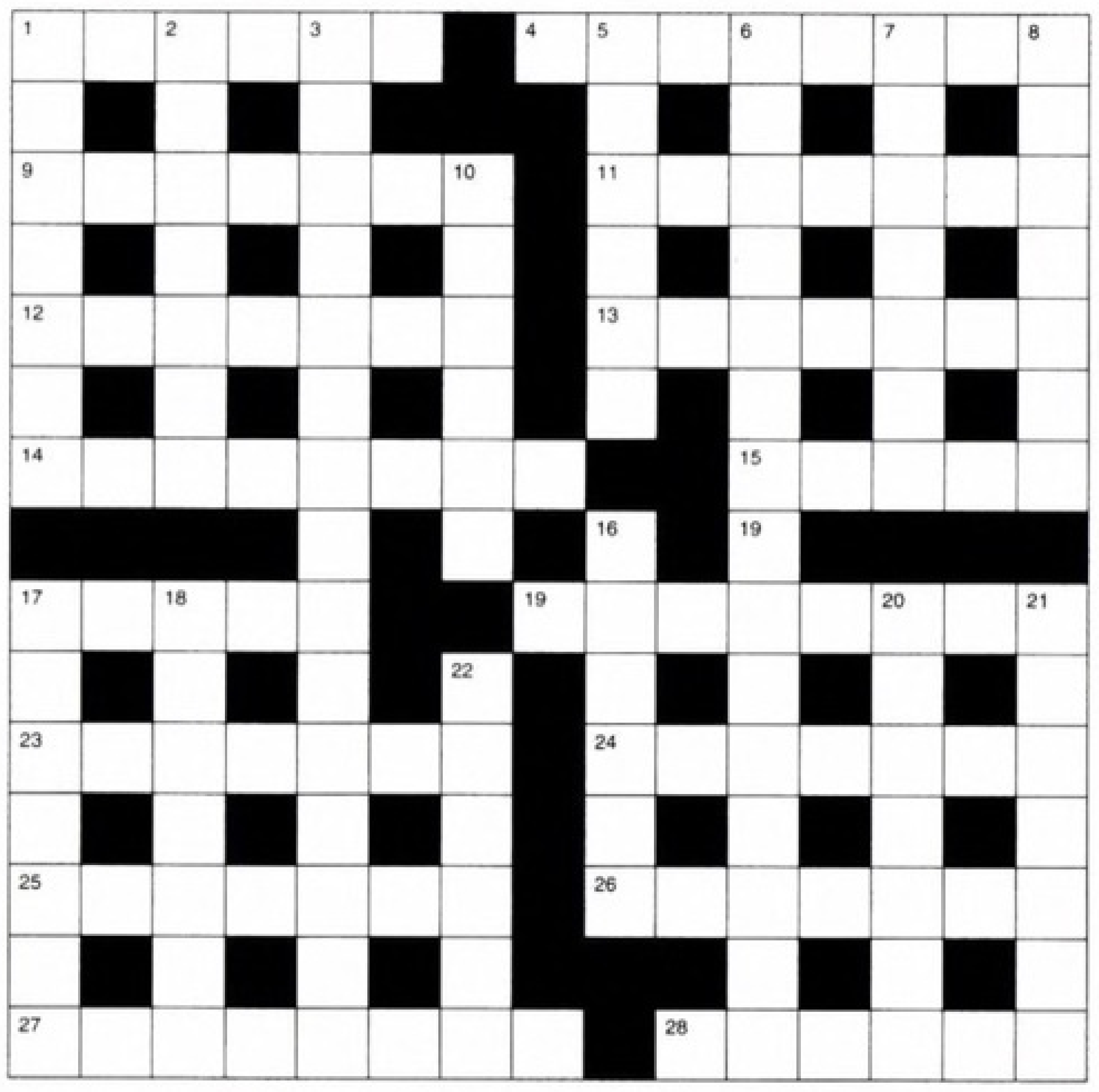
CRYPTIC

Across

1,9 Beforehand, aim was unsure – now terrorist leaders... (6-7)
4 ...Tontons Macoutes, perhaps? (8)
9 See 1 across.
11 Vegetation identification integral for 20... (7)
12 ...integral in Mediterranean – fruit stone identified (7)
13 First woman to hold a key – she's got out of there! (7)
14 Actuator of revolution – was Hitler one? (8)
15 He returned in a short jade wrap for the crusade (5)
17 11 – the sunshine say? (5)
19 Stern barrier to British Rail's potential privatization in Wales? (8)
23 Able to structure French denial about Beirut (7)
24 Sounds like the fourth team are at Chester (7)
25 He's seen in the galleries, painting in a 1960s fashion (7)
26 Interior in the style of the French, in quiet Algerian oasis (2,5)
27 Ancient Chinese-Siamese head-lopping trick (8)
28 Remove top from bunch to expose French fruit (6)

Down

1 Mine gold on a reef in Australia (7)
2 Mad Amin first – he believed in the presence of the soul (7)
3 The final solution is made up of traditional detergent (6,9)
5 Ruby is under 20 (11, looking back) and quite small to greet the king (6)
6 Very loud jeers – no subtle doubting, at first, of this president (6,9)
7 Goal about the last one to rebuild hut has a bearing (7)
8 Submarine tobacco of the Sargasso type (7)
10 Position where alto is trying to reach Top F and another, lower, note (6)
16 See 22
17 Sausage over sesame-top was the bane of Xerxes (7)
18 Ex-drinkers' club, with nearly treble internal membership, big in Canada (7)
20 Guatemalan volcano, as it pours into the Atlantic, loses convulsive tendency (7)
21 Hangers-on shelter at revolutionary's place (7)
22,16 A daring Hindi plot picks out leader (6,6)



LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

■	G	L	A	S	N	O	S	T	■	L	E	C	C	E
I	■	A	■	A	■	K	■	A	■	I	■	H	■	S
S	A	V	A	N	N	A	■	H	E	B	R	E	W	S
O	■	A	■	D	■	V	■	I	■	Y	■	C	■	E
T	U	L	S	A	■	A	S	T	R	A	K	H	A	N
O	■	■	■	K	■	N	■	I	■	N	■	E	■	■
P	H	A	L	A	N	G	E	■	■	■	G	N	U	S
I	■	P	■	N	■	O	■	M	■	A	■	Y	■	A
C	H	O	N	■	■	■	A	A	R	D	V	A	R	K
■	■	C	■	P	■	S	■	G	■	R	■	■	■	H
H	A	R	M	A	T	T	A	N	■	I	N	D	I	A
O	■	Y	■	T	■	R	■	O	■	A	■	R	■	L
A	M	P	H	O	R	A	■	L	U	T	H	U	L	I
R	■	H	■	I	■	I	■	I	■	I	■	S	■	N
E	V	A	N	S	■	T	H	A	T	C	H	E	R	■

QUICK

Across

1,9 Popular 'gang' name applied to the *Rote Armeè Fraktion*, active from 1968 (6-7)
4 Citizens of the western part of Hispaniola (8)
9 See 1 across
11 The 27th State of the Union – 1845 (7)
12 Green rock-forming mineral, known as peridot when a gemstone (7)
13 She is removed from a war-zone, for example (7)
14 Despot (8)
15 Holy war (5)
17 Affirm or expound (5)
19 Safety bar at the rear of a ship (8)
23 Mediterranean country which obtained its independence from France's mandate in 1943 (7)
24 District of England and Wales, downriver from Chester (7)
25 Simone ______ , fourteenth-century Sienese artist (7)
26 Large Algerian oasis on the Niger-Mediterranean trans-Saharan route (2,5)
27 Former Chinese entrepôt (population eight million) at the mouth of the Yangtse (8)
28 The pineapple or pingouin (6)

Down

1 Aboriginal term for a reef, or water above a reef (7)
2 Adherent of Stahl's theory of 1720 that the soul is the crux of life (7)
3 Process of tribal extermination (6,9)
5 Acknowledged as the first King of England, 871 AD (6)
6 The third President of the United States – 1801-9 (6,9)
7 Bearing on a compass reading clockwise from due north (7)
8 Marine alga (7)
10 Relating to a young animal in the egg (6)
16 See 22
17 Battle won by Themistocles of Athens over the Persians in 480 BC (7)
18 Canadian prairie province, once the domain of the Blackfoot (7)
20 Volcano (3546m) and crater lake, south-east of Guatemala City (7)
21 Annelid worms cultivated for the anti-coagulant *Hirudin* (7)
22,16 Prime Minister of India after Shastri in 1966 (6,6)

Run for your life

Desperate migrants from poor countries head for oil-rich states in search of decent jobs. All too often what they find, reports **Grace Pundyk**, is brutal employment as domestic servants.

Shokina's dark-skinned face is covered in bruises. On her arms long claw-like scars stretch down to her wrists, and the tell-tale burns of cigarette ends are dotted over the backs of her hands. Dressed in the standard uniform – suspiciously resembling a night-gown – of a domestic maid in Kuwait, she sits waiting in an isolated room at the Bangladeshi Embassy. After two years with her employer she has finally run away.

I have come here to interview Mr AT Ismael, First Secretary of Labour, about the problem of migrant domestic workers. He asks if I would like to meet a 'runaway' maid, and calls for Shokina to be brought in.

Lady in waiting – thousands of women come to oil-rich states from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India and the Philippines. But few leave with anything.

For the record, this story is for her and for countless others who share her experience.

I feel like a voyeur as this woman enters the room, covering her face with her headscarf, hiding her tears, grasping for what little self-respect she has left. She indicates to me all the places on her body that are hurt. She has been kicked in the back, punched in the head, scratched on the face, pinched, pulled, spat at. At night she was not allowed to sleep, instead having to stand facing the wall of the balcony outside – which was also her 'room'.

Her cooking duties were taken over by her employer, so she wouldn't be able to eat their food. But she was still expected to do everything else, from washing the car to washing her employer's feet, at whatever time she was commanded.

Shokina's employer was a woman.

I asked why she hadn't run away earlier. She said she didn't know where to go, as she had never been allowed to leave the building. The family treated her well for the first year, though she was never paid. The trouble began when she asked for her wages. The withholding of wages, says Mr Ismael, is the most common cause of complaint and is a problem that can usually be resolved within a couple of weeks. But Shokina doesn't know the full name or address of her employer.

Each year thousands of women and men travel from countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India and the Philippines to work as domestics in one of the oil-rich Arab countries. They sell dowries and family property, even take out a loan, to pay the fees recruitment agencies require. For their money they are promised a way out of poverty. In reality they are subjected to sexual, physical or mental abuse, or placed in menial jobs after being promised a more skilled position.

Almost daily in Kuwait local newspapers report the injustices and crimes committed against domestic workers: a man dowsed with petrol and set alight; a Sri Lankan woman convicted of murdering her unborn foetus by repeatedly punching her stomach after being raped by her employer; a maid found hanging from her employer's fan; a Filipino woman picked up by two policemen and raped.

Imagine what it's like to fly for the first time, not to be able to speak the local language, not to be able to read and write in your own; and then to realize that the country you have come to gives you no protection under the law. The experience can suddenly become terrifying.

The visa category for domestic workers in Kuwait falls outside the current Private Sector Labour Law. They cannot lay claim to such luxuries as days off, restricted working hours or holidays, and their only avenue for complaint is through mediation with their embassies. A Domestic Labour Department was set up, but primarily it monitors the maid-recruitment agencies.

Domestic workers are often caught in the crossfire between agencies and sponsors who have also paid agency fees and been promised trained staff. This situation, says Mr Ismael, just compounds the problem. 'We are trying to do the best we can and provide the necessary service to all involved,' he says diplomatically. 'Many employers become frustrated with their maids because these women do not know how to manage a house. They have paid for and been promised a fully qualified housekeeper when in reality they get a woman from a village who has no idea how to use a telephone or electrical appliance.'

Dr K Vijaya, president of the Indian Women's League, is quick to point out that not all maids are treated badly. On the contrary, she says, many women are employed by decent people who treat their maids as one of the family and pay them a good wage. She believes that it is only in desperation that people seek refuge at their embassies. 'These people have come out with a purpose,' she says, 'and are willing to face hardships up to a limit, but when basic human rights and dignity are denied them they have little choice but to run away.'

In the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia safe houses have been established for runaway victims. At the beginning of 1996 the Kuwaiti Government promised to build a compound to house runaway victims. Land was allocated, but as yet nothing else has been done.

In the meantime, for people like Shokina, embassy safe houses are a blessing. For her, there has been a small breakthrough – Mr Ismael has found her name on a recruitment-agency file. With this he should be able to piece together her last two years, locate her employer and retrieve her wages.

Paid or not, however, she will return to Bangladesh empty-handed. 'All the money I am owed will go in repaying the loan from the recruitment agency,' she says. 'I have nothing.'

She sits crying into her scarf, a tiny figure surrounded by officials. ■

Grace Pundyk is a freelance writer and photographer living in Kuwait.

Country profile

Bahrain

BAHRAIN is the only island state in the Arab world. Its total land area is under 600 square kilometres. Situated in the middle of the Persian Gulf off the north coast of Saudi Arabia, it is in some respects typical of the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula. But in others it is very different.

From about 3,000 to 300 BC it was the site of the ancient civilization of Dilmun, famed for its pearl fishing. Its location ensured it remained a thriving commercial centre. The Persians and Portuguese fought to control it in the seventeenth century, with the former eventually victorious. But in the late eighteenth century they too were ousted by the Al Khalifa, who signed a treaty with Britain and have remained the ruling family ever since.

Of its 600,000 inhabitants, two-thirds are indigenous Arabs. But of these a quarter are Sunni, of Bedouin origin, who came to the island with the Al Khalifa. They remain the most powerful segment of the population. The remainder of the Arab inhabitants, the Baharna, are largely Shi'ite, whose roots in the island go back very much further. The Shi'ite population also includes many families of relatively recent Iranian origin. The rest of the population, over 150,000, is composed of expatriate workers, mostly Asian.

In 1932 Bahrain became the first oil producer on the Arabian side of the Gulf. But unlike its neighbours, crude oil production does not dominate the Bahraini economy. It is not a member of OPEC; in fact it exports no crude oil at all. And although refined petroleum and hydrocarbon products are responsible for nearly two-thirds of its export earnings, it has been far more successful than the other Gulf states in diversifying its economy. It has the largest aluminium-smelting capacity in the Middle East, a large shipbuilding and repair industry and over the last 25 years it has developed into a major banking and financial-services centre.

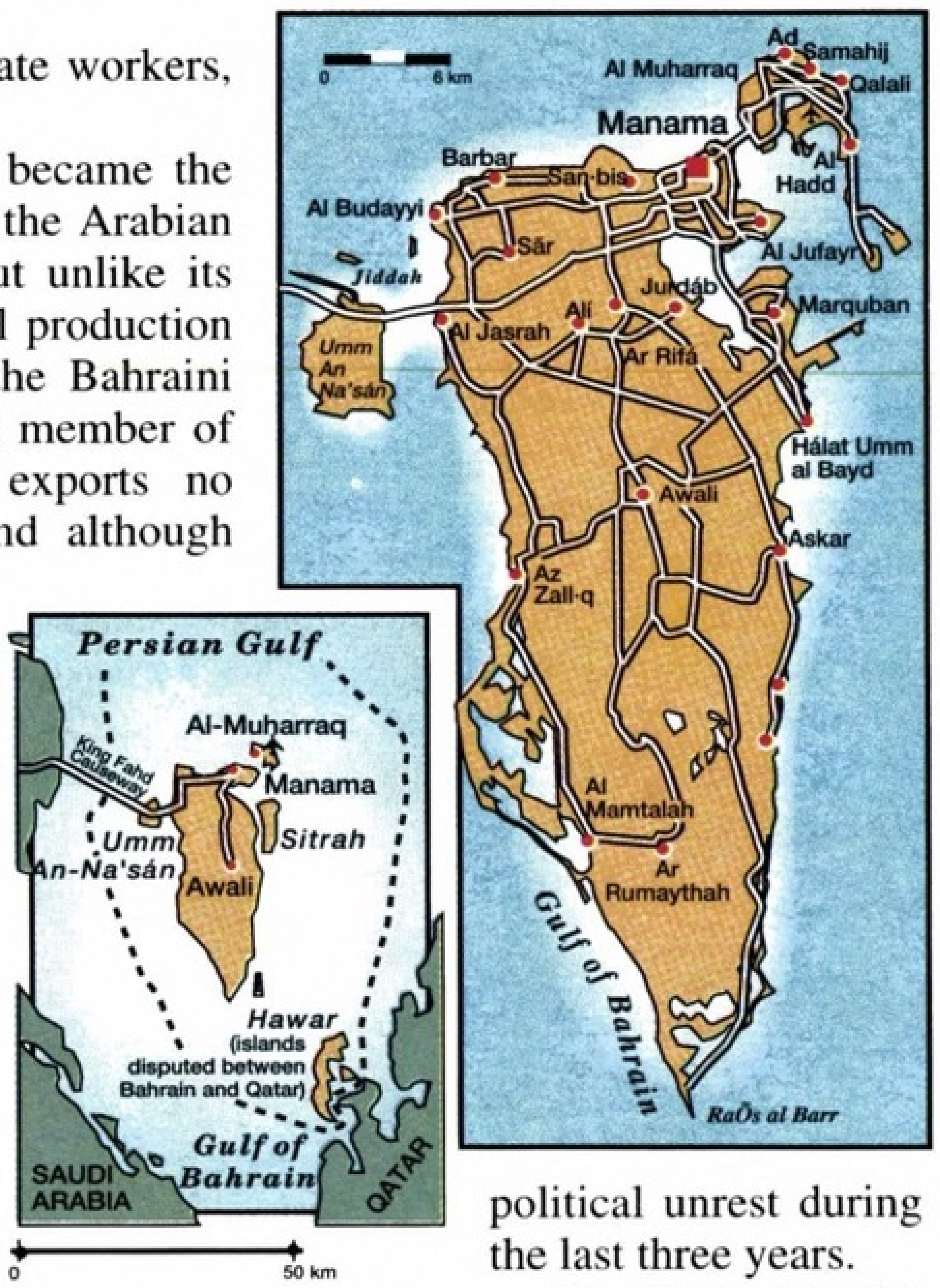
Although not as sumptuously wealthy as some of its neighbours, Bahrain is a prosperous country. Its education and healthcare systems are among the best in the Arab world. But the 1990s have witnessed an economic down-turn, with rising unemployment and falling living standards. This has led to political unrest during the last three years.

The Emir, Shaykh Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa, has ruled since 1961. Independence from Britain came in 1971. The first National Assembly was elected in 1973. But 20 months later the Emir disbanded it and all the trade unions as well. Since then, he has ruled by royal decree.

Dissent is not tolerated. The jails are full of political prisoners. Strikes and demonstrations are banned. Political dissidents are frequently deported from the country. During 1994 popular discontent burgeoned out of control. Demonstrations became more frequent, calling for the restoration of the Assembly and better distribution of the country's wealth. The Government's response was to blame Iranian *agents provocateurs* and to arrest the perceived ringleader, a popular young cleric, Shaykh Ali Salman. A dozen or more died in the rioting that followed. The unrest has continued ever since.

The Government shows no sign of a willingness to make concessions. It has called on its Western allies – Britain chief among them – for support. British trade with Bahrain has been unaffected. Since 1971, the Emir's Special Intelligence Service (SIS), whose principal task is the suppression of dissent, has been headed by a Scot, Ian Henderson. Under Henderson, the SIS has developed a gruesome reputation for horrific torture practices, ranging from electrocution to removal of toenails. The torture of political prisoners, according to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, is commonplace. On 5 March, Henderson 'retired' for health reasons, according to official reports. It seems most unlikely that Bahrain's human-rights record will improve to any great extent with his departure.

Steve Sherman



ITEM WORLD GUIDE 1996/97

AT A GLANCE

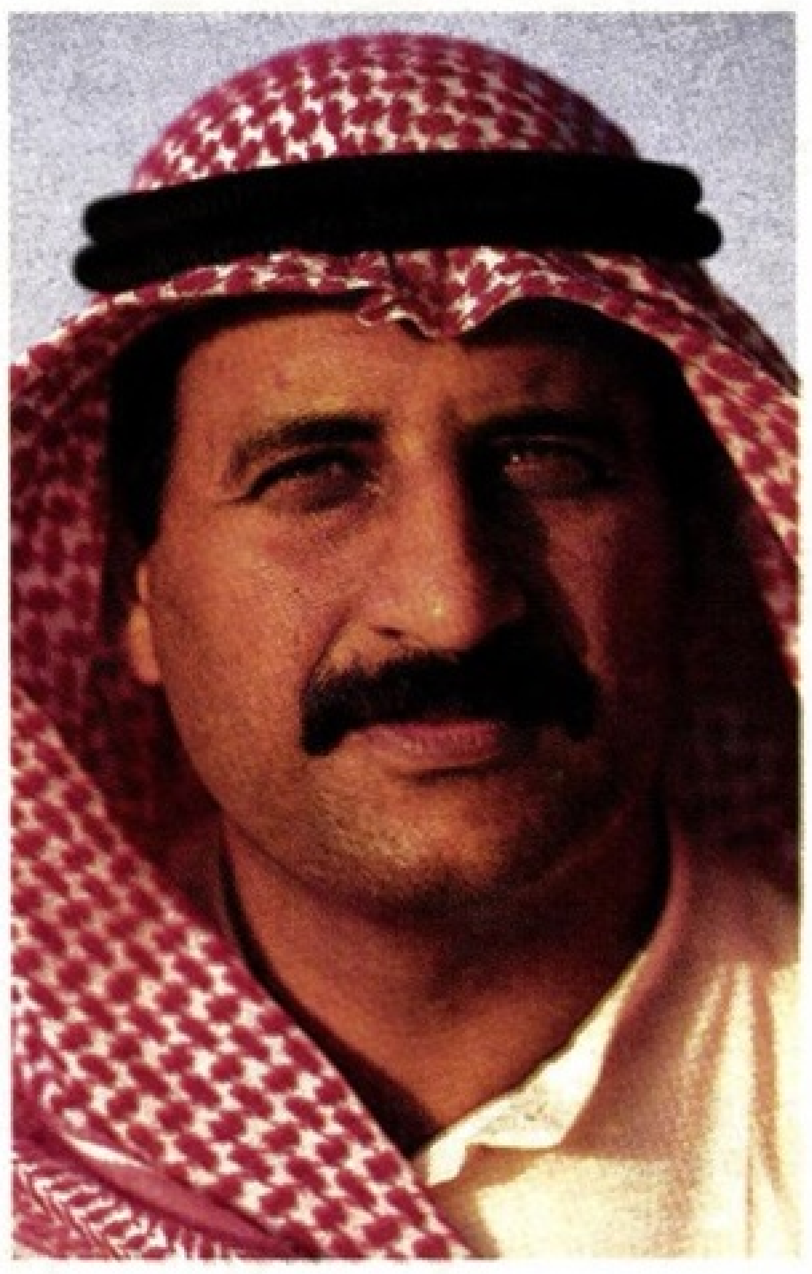
Leader Shaykh Isa al-Khalifa

Economy GNP per capita $7,000 (Australia $18,000).
Monetary Unit: the dinar = 1,000 fils.
Main exports: hydrocarbon products, aluminium.
Main imports: virtually everything.

People 600,000

Health Infant mortality 12 per 1,000 live births (Ireland 6 per 1,000).

Culture Some two-thirds of the population are native Bahraini Arabs; the remainder, the non-citizen population, are expatriates mostly from South Asia, but with a fair number of Europeans, Southeast Asians and Arabs from outside the Gulf. There is also a sizeable Iranian community.
Religion: Muslim, mostly Shi'ite.
Language: Arabic



GUY MANSFIELD / PANOS

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

Sources: World Bank *Annual Report*, 1997; *Europe, Middle East & North Africa Yearbook, 1996.*

Not previously profiled

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★★
Few people are poor, but much of the country's wealth is in the hands of a small (mostly Sunni) minority.

LITERACY ★★★★
Close to 90%, even for women.

SELF-RELIANCE ★★
Industrial diversification means oil is not the only commodity on offer, but nearly all food, raw materials and manufactured goods are imported.

FREEDOM ★
Disastrous on all counts. No representation, even token. No political institutions. No dissent or protest is tolerated. Opposition subject to arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, torture and deportation.

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★
Better educated and with better quality of life than in some neighbouring countries, but no political rights or representation.

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★
71 years. Compares with Canada 78 and United Arab Emirates 74.

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★
Bahrain is the only Gulf Arab state with a large indigenous working class. It is the most developed in terms of social institutions and yet the most repressed in terms of political institutions. It is difficult to see how the regime hopes to overcome the present unrest. The arrests, torture and deportations look set to continue.

RTC Skills & Strategies for Peace

RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

Towards Peacebuilding

Developing new policy and practice in areas of instability and conflict

6-10 July 1998, Birmingham, UK
19-23 October 1998, Geneva, Switzerland (in association with Quaker United Nations Office)
7-11 December 1998, Soesterberg, The Netherlands (in association with the European Platform for Conflict Prevention)

For staff of international agencies with advisory or direct responsibility for programme policy and implementation.

These workshops will provide practical models and methods to assist aid agency staff to analyse social and political conflicts, and to integrate effective conflict-handling strategies into their programmes.

For the Geneva workshop, participants should understand both French and English and may speak in either language.

For information about this and about other courses and services we offer, please contact: **Responding to Conflict Programme, Selly Oak Colleges (NI), 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ, UK.**
Tel: (+44) (0) 121 415 5641. Fax: (+44) (0) 121 415 4119.
E-mail: enquiries@respond.org.
Website: http://www.respond.org/

Responding to Conflict provides opportunities for individuals and organisations to develop new ways of working on conflict.

Registered charity no. 1015906

World Invocation Day

Tuesday 9th June 1998

Will you join in this day of prayer and meditation by using the Great Invocation:

THE GREAT INVOCATION

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –
The purpose which the Masters know
and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men
let the plan of love and Light work out
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the
Plan on Earth.

In some translations of the great Invocation the name by which the Coming One is know in different religions is used e.g. the Lord Maitreye, Krishna, the Imam Mahdi and the Messiah.

World Goodwill – Suite 54,
3 Whitehall Court,
London SW1A 2EF, UK.

CUBA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

143 COUNTRIES CAN'T BE WRONG

At the last General Assembly of the United Nations, 143 countries, including Britain, voted against the United States' illegal and immoral economic blockade of Cuba. Add your voice to the growing worldwide demand for Cuba's right to sovereignty and self-determination. Join The ***Cuba Solidarity Campaign*** *today.*

Join the ***Cuba Solidarity Campaign*** now and receive:

- our magazine, ***CubaSí***, sent to you 4 times a year
- regular updates and access to our extensive library
- details of work brigades and special interest tours
- discounts on a range of events and merchandise

✂

YES! I/We want to support the Cuba Solidarity Campaign

Name..Address.....................................
....
Postcode.................. Tel (h)............................ (w)..........................

Membership rates: Individuals waged £15, Unwaged £5

☐ I enclose a membership fee of £.........
☐ I enclose a donation towards the work of CSC £........
☐ Please send me further information about Cuba Solidarity Campaign
☐ Please send me my free CD

Please make all cheques payable to ***'Cuba Solidarity Campaign'***. Please return to: CSC, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG.

Join Cuba Solidarity Campaign now and we will send you a free 27-track CD featuring the best of Latin American music

Tel: 0171 263 6452. Fax: 0171 561 0191. E.Mail **cubasc@gn.apc.org.**
Visit our Web site at **http://www.poptel.org.uk/cuba-solidarity**

Free CD offer!

ihe
INTERNATIONAL
HEALTH EXCHANGE

Health Jobs in Developing Countries

International Health Exchange (IHE) can help you find a challenging and rewarding position in a developing country.

We can supply you with information on numerous jobs with international aid agencies through our magazine, job supplement and register of health professionals. IHE is a charity which gives you the opportunity to contribute to equitable health development.

Phone, fax or mail for an information pack:
International Health Exchange
8-10 Dryden Street, London WC2E 9NA, UK.
Tel: +44 171 836 5833. Fax: +44 171 379 1239.
E-mail: info@ihe.org.uk

Charity No. 1002749

ETHICAL INVESTMENTS

Profit with a conscience

FREE impartial advice on ethical pensions, mortgages, savings and life assurance.

KINGSWOOD
Consultants
Independent Financial Advisers

Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority
PIA Reg.No 52146
PIA

Founding member of the UK Social Investments Forum

Please return this advert with your name, address & telephone no. for more details
FREEPOST Kingswood House, 29 North Street, Bicester, Oxon OX6 7NB
Tel: Bicester (01869) 252545 http://www.kingswoodethical.co.uk

Statutory warning: The value of an investment can fall as well as rise. PIA Statutory notive: PIA does not regulate mortgages.

GREEN – RED TRAVEL

CUBA STUDY TOUR

14 days with socialist guides in the glorious setting of Old Havana, Pinar del Rio, Cienfuegos, Trinidad and Sta Clara. Get to know the Cuban people, their achievements in health and education, their music, theatres and the salsa beat. Then relax, walk, swim, scuba or party on some of the Caribbean's finest beaches from £875. Five departures in 1998: new East Cuba Study Tour from September in Santiago and Baracoa.

EXPERIENCE SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

16 days from London, meeting those who fought apartheid and now struggle for a new life for the African millions. Contacts include Soweto, Kathlehong, Durban and the Cape townships, an overnight with farm families in Eastern Cape rondavels, game drives at Mvubu Lodge combined with discussions at Nelson Mandela's University of Fort Hare, and meeting families once ruthlessly driven from their homes, now resettling at Rosboom after 25 years of exile in utter poverty. The glorious scenery, beaches and wild life of this magnificent country will be with us throughout the tour which includes the Hout Bay – Cape Point drive and ends at Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens transfer direct to our London flight.

We also provide any flight, tour or cruise for individual travel, now in our 50th year.

Progressive Tours Ltd.

12 PORCHESTER PLACE, MARBLE ARCH, LONDON W2 2BS
TEL: 0171 262 1676, FAX: 0171 724 6946, ATOL 447, IATA, ABTA 50669
E-Mail: 101533.513@compuserve.com

YOGA and SCIENCE

The practice of yoga has helped many to achieve inner peace and control of their lives.
It is a part of a much greater philosophy which can provide a path not only to personal but to international peace and even to universal brotherhood.
This Esoteric Science has been researched and expounded by modern Theosophy, a rich resource for the inquiring mind.

For further information please write to
The Blavatsky Trust
Dept. NI2/A. c/o The Theosophical Society,
50 Gloucester Place, London W1H 4EA.

APARTHEID DID NOT DIE?

Judge for yourself – join our 14-day fact-finding tour. Visit places featured in John Pilger's thought-provoking documentary. Witness and consider, in conversation with ordinary South Africans, the first results of the transition to democracy.

Departures: August to November.
Phone for our brochure: tours and self-drive itineraries with a focus on development in southern Africa.

RAINBOW TOURS tel: 0171 226 1004
community development through tourism

ATOL 4563
Canon Collins House,
64 Essex Road, London N1 8LR
Email rainbow@gn.apc.org

To advertise in New Internationalist, contact:

TERRY LOCK MEDIA SALES
3 Forest Way,
Ashtead, Surrey KT21 1JN
Tel/Fax: 01372 276233

GREEN WORKING HOLIDAYS
Desert reclamation research. Whether expert or starter you work:
24 hours weekly paying from £60
35 hours paying from £42
Spain! Sun! Shared purpose! Good company! Good food!
Details: £1 from Sunseed Trust Unit N, P.O. Box 2000 Cambridge CB4 3UJ
01865 721530 T/F

24 Hour Divorce

Legal and available
Call/fax for full details:
Foreign Divorce Dept
+44(0)16 25 252 182
or e-mail:
PSS@xlprod.nwnet.co.uk

SERVAS
open doors, open minds.

A worldwide network of travellers & hosts to help build international peace.

Details:
SERVAS INTERNATIONAL NI,
PO Box 1035, Edinburgh,
EH3 9JQ, UK.
or for Australia:
Kevin Newham, PO BOX 1086,
Airlie Beach, Queensland 4802,
Australia.

JOURNEY LATIN AMERICA
Low cost flights and escorted group holidays. Fully bonded tour operator ABTA 86321 ATOL 2828 AITO. *Journey Latin America, 16 Devonshire Road, London W4 2HD, UK. Tel: 0181 747 8315*

AFRICA

We are looking for adventurous people to join our journey of a lifetime across the remotest parts of Africa.
If you feel you are up to it then call: 01740 623633
4, Rosedale Close,
Sedgefield, Cleveland.

THE ANGLICAN PACIFIST FELLOWSHIP
(A Registered Charity)
believes that faith in Jesus Christ calls for the repudiation of all war.
We seek to witness to that belief within the Anglican Communion at all levels.
Enquiries to:
APF, 11 Weavers End
Hanslope, Milton Keynes MK19 7PA

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD
International Voluntary Service has 600 work projects in 40 countries
Work with children/special needs, community building, environmental and anti racist work
IN: UK, former Soviet Union, USA, North Africa, Australia and Japan.
For complete Summer Programme send £4 with A$ SAE to IVS, Castlehill House, 21 Otley Road, Leeds LS6 3AA

Get a different perspective on the world with the

WorldView Book Club

Special offers on selected books on global issues. For your free trial copy (no obligation to buy) send to:

WV Book Club Trial Offer
P.O. Box 595 Oxford OX2 6YH
Tel. 01865-201562
Fax 01865-201906
email: worldview@patrol.i-way.co.uk

BOOKS ON CUBA

over 40 titles on Cuba from Ocean Press

recent titles

Che Guevara Reader

Cuba at the Crossroads by Fidel Castro

Cuba and the United States

AfroCuba

Cuba: Talking about Revolution

Greening of the Revolution

CIA targets Fidel

Che: A memoir by Fidel Castro

Che Guevara and the FBI

Fidel and Religion

For a full list of books on Cuba:
Ocean Press
PO Box 3279, Melbourne 3001
Australia
fax: 61-3-93721765 or
email: ocean_press @msn.com

Britain & Europe:
Global Book Marketing
38 King St, London WC2E 8JT, UK
tel: 44-171-836 3020
fax: 44-171-497 0309
email: ea28@dial.pipex.com

THE
NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

School of Graduate Studies and Research
Postgraduate Taught Courses

MA International Cultural Studies

There are three core modules: Cultural Theory and Cultural Policy; Versions of the International; and Researching Culture; options are available in: Culture and Development; Islam and the West; Hybridity; Border Identities and the Cultural Process. Subject to validation, options will also be available in Body and Society; Social and Cultural Theory; and Technoculture.

MA International Relations
There is one core module: International Relations – A Critical Introduction; Options include: Globalisation and Resistance; Gender and International Relations; Theoretical Approaches to International Relations; Cultural Imperialism.

MA Asia-Pacific Studies (pending validation)
This course is concerned with the key actors and issues in the contemporary Asia-Pacific region, and includes a study of business and economics, law, security, and the environment. Language skills can be developed in Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, and English.

There is a competitive POSTGRADUATE STUDENTSHIP SCHEME for the students on the University's taught Master's programmes.

Postgraduate Degree Opportunities
The school offers Research Degree (M.Phil/PhD) programmes in the following areas: Cultural, Media, and Communication Studies; English Literary Studies; European Studies (French, German, Spanish); History; Human Geography; International Relations; Social Theory. UK, EC, and overseas students may register on a full-time or part-time basis. Some bursary awards may be available.

There are four Research Centres: Centre for Asia Pacific Studies (CAPS); Centre for Research in International Communications and Culture (CRICC); Raymond Williams Centre for English Research; Theory, Culture and Society (TCS) Centre, and applications are invited to carry out research in any of these centres. The Theory, Culture and Society Centre (Director: Mike Featherstone) is offering five TCS awards of £4,500 (approx $7,500) over three years for full-time PhD students. Full details of the extensive research carried out by the Centre are available on request.

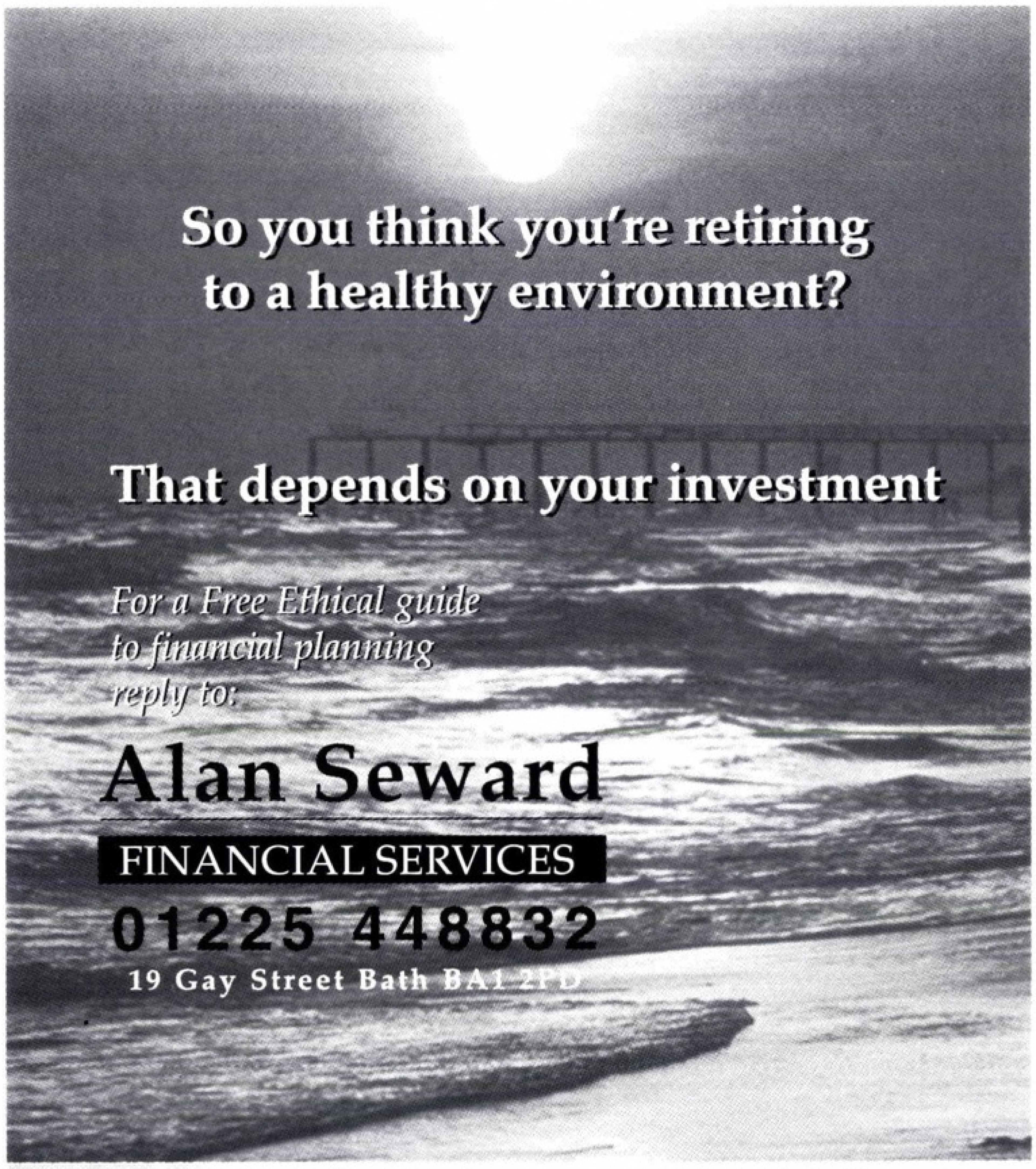
Further information is available from: Terry McSwiney (Research degrees) or Hellen Muskett (MA programmes)

Graduate School Office, Faculty of Humanities, The Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham NG11 8NS

Tel: +44 (0)115 948 6321 (Research) or 948 6335 (MA programmes)
Fax: +44 (0)115 948 6339

The Nottingham Trent University

COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING



So you think you're retiring to a healthy environment?

That depends on your investment

For a Free Ethical guide to financial planning reply to:

Alan Seward
FINANCIAL SERVICES
01225 448832
19 Gay Street Bath BA1 2PD

Cut along dotted line fill in and return to Alan Seward Financial Services 19 Gay Street Bath BA1 2PD

PIA
A Member of
Countrywide
Independent Advisers Ltd
which is regulated
by the Personal
Investment Authority
for life assurance,
pensions & investment
business only

Please send me more information on Ethical investments
Name: ______
Address: ______
______
______
Postcode: ______
Telephone number: ______ Work: ______

Stewardship
a decent investment

The Stewardship International Trust

It's International

- Invests in companies throughout the world which do more good than harm to society.
- Initial portfolio invests in territories which can be screened to an acceptable standard – UK, continental Europe, North America and Australasia.
- More territories will be added as better information becomes available.

It's Ethical

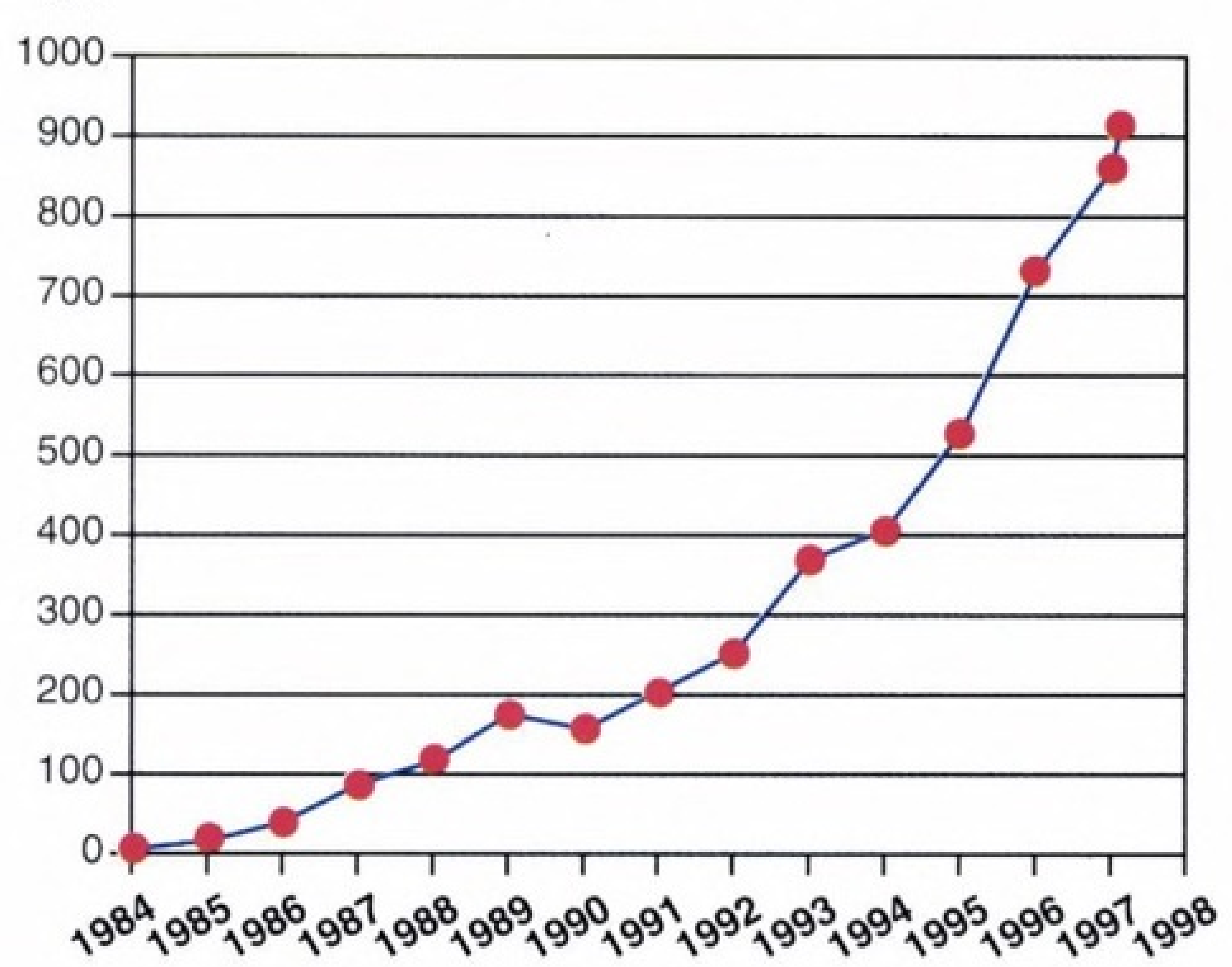
- Meets the same positive and negative criteria as the UK Stewardship trusts and funds.
- In North America, screening is conducted by the US Stewardship Committee of Reference, with the help of Kinder, Lydenberg, Domini & Co.
- Elsewhere, screening is conducted by the UK Stewardship Committee of Reference, with assistance from the Ethical Investment Research Service.

It's PEPable

- Available tax free through the Stewardship PEP until April 1999.
- Friends Provident intends that all trusts available under the Stewardship PEP will be compatible with the new Individual Savings Account.

It's part of the UK's first and largest range of ethical funds

Stewardship funds under management
1984 – 30 January 1998



For more information call us on 0800 731 2525

Member of
UK
Social
Investment
Forum

First Call
FRIENDS PROVIDENT
Your First Call for Financial Advice

Investment
performance awards
1996
Top Performer
FRIENDS PROVIDENT
Large Unit Trust category

REPRESENTATIVE ONLY OF THE FRIENDS PROVIDENT MARKETING GROUP, WHICH IS REGULATED BY THE PERSONAL INVESTMENT AUTHORITY, FOR LIFE ASSURANCE, PENSION AND UNIT TRUST BUSINESS

www.friendsprovident.co.uk/stewardship

The value of an investment and any income from it is not guaranteed and can go up and down depending on investment performance. Where a unit trust invests overseas, the value of the investment, and any income from it, can go up and down simply because of changes in currency exchange rates. Full details are available on request from any Friends Provident office.

The Government is proposing to introduce a new tax-privileged plan, the Individual Savings Account (ISA). This new plan will replace PEPs and TESSAs when it is launched in April 1999. Although it might not be possible to continue investment in a PEP once ISAs are introduced, PEPs will continue to enjoy the existing tax benefits until 1999.